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Awad El-Morr, portrait of the week by Bahgory 8



Bullets and ballots

ALGERIAN President Liamine Zeroual assured officials from 10 political parties on Tuesday that upcoming legislative elections would be held in safety, playing down the reported deterioration of the security situation. He proposed either 29 May or 5 June as the date for the elections, the first since the cancellation of the second round of elections in January 1992. The talks on Tuesday drew representatives from the main pro-government political parties, but was shunned by the Front of Socialist Forces and the pro-communist "Ettehadi" parties.

Meanwhile, the human rights organisation Amnesty International condemned the daily massacre of civilians that left more than 350 dead and hundreds more injured during the holy month of Ramadan. Amnesty International appealed, in a communiqué carried by AFP yesterday, for urgent measures by the Algerian government and the international community to protect civilians.

US-Iraq clash

IRAQ and the United States have clashed over the slow delivery of UN-sanctioned humanitarian goods under the "oil-for-food" deal that went into effect last December. Following a meeting with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Monday, Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoon said that not one kilogramme of rice or sugar has reached Iraq in the last two months. He complained that the Security Council's sanctions committee was slow in approving the food shipments.

Annan promised, according to Reuters, to provide more details on deliveries and asked Hamdoon to relay operational problems to Baghdad. US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns on Tuesday placed the entire blame on Iraq. He stated that Iraq is delaying access to transportation and communication to the UN monitors and is denying them freedom of movement.

Rushdie price

AN IRANIAN religious foundation has raised to $2.5 million the reward it placed on the head of British author Salman Rushdie for allegedly insulting Islam in his book "The Satanic Verses."

The Khordad-15 Foundation, run by figures close to the regime, said in a statement issued yesterday that the *fatwa* to kill Rushdie was a divine decree.

Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, AFP reported, distanced himself from the move saying the non-governmental organistion did not reflect the government's policy.

The announcement came on the eve of the eighth anniversary of the death sentence against Rushdie issued by the late spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, in February 1989.

Market opens

THE PALESTINIAN Authority took the first step yesterday towards reopening Hebron's main wholesale vegetable market. Three years ago, the Israeli authorities closed the bazaar following the massacre of 29 Palestinians by a Jewish settler in nearby Al-Ibrahimi Mosque.

Israeli officials denied earlier reports that formal authorisation had been given to resume business in the market, as called for under the 15 January agreement which turned over most of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority. Israeli army officers had stated that the market was slated for reopening, but had refused to fix a date.

An Israeli-Palestinian committee on economic affairs also began work in Jerusalem yesterday. The agenda includes a dispute over the amount Israel must reimburse the Palestinians for the taxes they have paid over the years.



Through the window of the bus that will take her home, this woman gives the v-sign of Palestinian resistance, celebrating her release from an Israeli prison *(photo: AFP)*

Home at last

In an emotional West Bank homecoming, Palestinian women released from Israeli jails were warmly welcomed by Yasser Arafat

Palestinian women freed from Israeli prisons after months of political and legal wrangling received a rousing welcome yesterday in the self-rule town of Ramallah from families, friends and President Yasser Arafat.

To the cheers of hundreds of well-wishers and relatives gathered ouside the Ramallah governor's headquarters, a bus carrying 26 released detainees from Tel Mond prison outside Tel Aviv arrived at around 2am.

The smiling women reached out of the bus windows to wave, shake hands and flash the victory sign as the vehicle made its way slowly through a crowd of several hundred people outside the governor's compound and another 200 packed in the courtyard. The women filed from the bus straight into the building, where Arafat and the women's families held a brief reception ceremony.

In all, 30 women were freed from Israeli prisons, in accordance with the peace accords Israel signed with the Palestinians. Some were taken to their homes in East Jerusalem and one, Brazilian-born Lamya Marouf, was immediately deported.

"I'm proud to be on free Palestinian land," shouted Abir Wahaibi, 27, as she climbed off the bus in Ramallah and was surrounded by ecstatic relatives who had been waiting since noon on Tuesday, over 12 hours earlier.

Wahaibi was convicted of heading a group that attacked Israeli soldiers and settlers, and served four and a half years of a life sentence. She said the release of the prisoners was "a beginning" towards peace with Israel.

During the bus trip, the women — many of whom were jailed before Palestinian autonomy came to Ramallah and other West Bank areas — peppered the conversation with accompanying journalists with questions about the nature of self-rule.

"Is this Israel or Palestine?" one woman asked when the bus driver announced they had just entered Ramallah.

The release of the women — several of whom were involved in fatal attacks on Israelis — brought Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu severe criticism from hardliners, including his own supporters. It is his second concrete move, after last month's pullout of Israeli troops from most of Hebron, to carry out the peace process he once opposed.

Several dozen protesters carrying signs reading "Freed to kill again" and "Kill Jews for peace", marched outside Netanyahu's office in Jerusalem on Tuesday. Three of the demonstrators carried a coffin with a sign reading "Victims of peace."

Arafat called the release a positive sign for peace with Israel. "No doubt this will help the relationship between the two peoples," he told reporters in Ramallah.

The releases came after a year of delays and wrangling and a long day of waiting and confusion. Seven women had left the prison earlier on Tuesday but one was returned to jail because of a petition to block her release filed with the Supreme Court. Three others insisted on being returned to prison in solidarity with her. Finally after 11pm Tuesday night, all the remaining prisoners climbed onto the bus to make the trip to freedom.

"It was difficult but in the end they were released and that's what counts," said Jibril Rajoub, head of preventive security in the West Bank. "This is a step toward achieving coexistence with Israel. The Israeli government showed it was serious by releasing these women."

The release was among the promises in the peace accords with the Palestinians signed by Netanyahu's dovish predecessors. As opposition leader, Netanyahu fought bitterly against the agreements, but after his election victory he said he would honour Israel's commitments to the Palestinians.

The release of the women was initially set for the autumn of 1995, but the Israeli president and an army commander at the time refused to pardon five women involved in the killing of Israelis. The others remained behind bars in solidarity with these women.

The release was finalised at a meeting last Sunday between Netanyahu and Arafat.

The petition to block the release, which was turned down by the Supreme Court, was filed by a group representing families of Israeli victims, which argued that some of the women were not on the original list authorised by the government. The court had thrown out another appeal against the release filed by the group a day earlier.

It was not clear yesterday how many Palestinian women remained in Israeli jails, although they are believed to be very few. About 3,500 Palestinian men remain in Israeli jails and their fate depends on future negotiations.

US upbeat on peace prospects

THE UNITED States, buoyed by last month's Hebron accord, hopes to use talks with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu this week to chart a steadier course for the Middle East peace process.

President Bill Clinton and his aides will explore with Netanyahu ways to revive Israeli negotiations with Syria and help set the stage for the Israeli-Palestinian final status talks next month, US officials said.

With the Hebron crisis behind them, US officials are sounding upbeat about the Middle East peace process. They want a clear agenda to emerge from the Netanyahu talks, which will be followed by meetings with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Jordan's King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"Last month's agreement on the redeployment of Israeli forces in Hebron was an extraordinary success for US diplomacy," Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told legislators on Tuesday. "It helped to create new confidence and trust between the parties. It provides a road map for the future and it restores momentum to the overall peace process."

Netanyahu's three-day visit includes a meeting today with Albright — their first since she became secretary of state — to be followed by talks with Clinton at the White House.

The Israeli prime minister will also meet with new Defence Secretary William Cohen, Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and members of Congress before heading to New York to meet with Jewish groups on Saturday.

Netanyahu will be among the first foreign leaders to meet with Clinton since he was sworn in last month for a second term that his aides say will focus more on foreign policy than his first.

Albright has outlined a three-part agenda for the Middle East peace process in testimony to the Foreign Relations Committee of the House of Representatives. It comprises: supporting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations; restarting Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese talks; and expanding ties between Arab states and Israel.

The agreement on the Israeli withdrawal from Hebron paved the way for talks on the final status of the Palestinian territories that are to open in March and end in May 1999. The talks will deal with the sensitive issues of control over Jerusalem, the return of refugees, Palestinian statehood, the fate of Jewish settlements on the West Bank, border delineation and water-sharing.

On the Syrian track, the United States has been seeking to restart negotiations that broke down a year ago during a wave of bombings in Israel which led the former Labour government to withdraw from the talks. While US officials are not optimistic about a resumption of the Israeli-Syrian talks, they have maintained efforts to seek an agreement on a basis for reviving the negotiations.

Syria maintains that talks with Israel must continue from where they left off last year when an agreement on the return of the Golan Heights was taking shape. But Netanyahu has insisted new talks must start afresh "without preconditions," maintaining that any previous deal between Syria and Labour over the Golan is not valid.

A peace agreement between Israel and Syria would open the way for an Israeli accord with Lebanon that would bring about a comprehensive peace in the Middle East for the first time since the creation of Israel in 1948.

As Netanyahu left for his third visit to Washington since taking office in June, Israeli warplanes staged mock air raids deep into Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon in what AFP said was a warning to Damascus that backing violence would not force Israel's hand. On Tuesday, Israeli aircraft targeted positions of the Hizbollah movement and a Damascus-backed Palestinian radical group in Lebanon, wounding four people.

Lebanon first, Golan never?

The recent Israeli air disaster has revived the debate on whether Israel should withdraw unilaterally from south Lebanon. **Graham Usher**, in Jerusalem, writes

The death of 73 Israeli soldiers in the collision of two army transport helicopters on 4 February has once more focused attention on what one Israeli journalist has called "our little Vietnam" — Israel's 18-year occupation of south Lebanon.

No sooner had Israelis observed a national day of mourning for the victims on 6 February than Israel's Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani became the first member of Binyamin Netanyahu's cabinet to throw his weight behind calls for a unilateral withdrawal of Israeli troops from what is now Israel's bloodiest occupation. Seeking a "new outlook" on Israel's strategies in south Lebanon, Kahalani called for a "gradual" pull-out of the Israeli army from the occupied zone, direct talks with Hizbullah and the stationing of a multinational force to guarantee security for Israel's northern border with Lebanon. Should Hizbullah then continue to "kill our soldiers", Kahalani warned, "we will blow up roads, power stations and installations throughout Lebanon."

Kahalani's threat of massive retaliation against Hizbullah (and the Lebanese people) is hardly new. But the other elements in his proposal suggest there are growing differences within Netanyahu's coalition over how Israel can extricate itself from south Lebanon.

Following his victory in the Israeli elections last May, Netanyahu floated the idea of "Lebanon first" as a way of restarting the Israel-Syrian peace process suspended in February 1995 by the then Labour government for Syria's refusal to describe Islamist suicide operations in Israel as "terrorist". Netanyahu said Israel would be prepared to withdraw from south Lebanon in exchange for Lebanese and Syrian government assurances to disarm Hizbullah and curb its operations in the south.

Syria immediately scotched the idea, arguing that peace in south Lebanon would come through the withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlements from the occupied Golan Heights. "I say Lebanon and Syria first, not Lebanon first," was President Assad's comment in August.

Since then, Israel's policy for south Lebanon has festered, but at an increasing cost. Last year, Hizbullah mounted over 300 operations in the occupied zone, killing 27 Israeli soldiers. More ominously as far as Israel is concerned, Hizbullah has improved its operational and intelligence capabilities among the 100,000 Lebanese who live within the 15km-wide occupied zone. The killing of three Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah on 29 January occurred while the soldiers were on a "secret" ambush operation rather than on a routine patrol, suggesting that Hizbullah's intelligence on the army and its allied Lebanese militia, the south Lebanon Army (SLA), in the occupied zone now goes very deep.

The result in Israel is frustration within the political echelon and an increasing crisis of morale among soldiers who serve in the zone. "Our soldiers have turned into sitting ducks for Hizbullah," says Labour parliamentarian and leadership challenger Yossi Beilin. "We need to get out of Lebanon unilaterally with the aid of a third party." Beilin made these comments over a week before the helicopter collision. Along with Kahalani's remarks, they show there is a growing constituency within both Labour and Likud to get out of Lebanon with or without Lebanese-Syrian "assurances" over curbing Hizbullah's resistance.

Netanyahu's response to such new thinking has been to refloat the Lebanon first proposal. "If I knew with a high level of certainty that Hizbullah would be reined in and not threaten Israel when the IDF [Israeli Defence Force] is withdrawn, I would remove" the army "immediately," he said on 10 February. It is a position supported by his defence minister, Yitzak Mordechai, and the army's Military Intelligence head, Moshe Ya'alon, both of whom argue that Israel should preserve its military presence in south Lebanon.

Less clear are the reactions of Lebanon and Syria to any unilateral Israeli withdrawal. Lebanon's prime minister, Rafik Hariri, has said in the past that once Israel withdraws from south Lebanon in accordance with UN Resolution 425, the Lebanese army would deploy its forces there, effectively stopping Hizbullah's freedom of action in the south. Formally, too, Syria is not opposed to any Israeli pull-out. "We would applaud," says Syria's US ambassador, Walid Mualem. "If Israel fulfilled UN Security Council Resolution 425, obliging it to withdraw to the international border without preconditions, we would be delighted."

Less publicly, say Lebanese sources, Syria would be alarmed by an Israeli withdrawal. Syria demands that the Likud government resume negotiations "from where they left off" in February 1995, meaning that Netanyahu commit himself to the pledges reportedly made by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres to dismantle settlements on the Golan Heights and withdraw Israeli forces to the June 1967 lines in return for US-brokered security and normalisation arrangements. Netanyahu has said his government will not be bound by these "unsigned" understandings.

Syria's response has been to increase logistical and political support to Hizbullah's resistance in south Lebanon to get Israel back to the negotiating table on these terms, and no other. Should Israel withdraw unilaterally from south Lebanon — and especially if Beilin's "third party" turned out to be Arab or European forces — Syria would lose its only military leverage with the Likud government. "For Syria," says one Lebanese observer, "Lebanon first could mean the Golan never."

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Opposition slams private airports

Parliamentarians were divided last week over the anticipated impact on national security of a new law allowing entrepreneurs to operate airports. **Gamal Essam El-Din** investigates

A new law allowing the private sector to lease and operate airports has drawn a mixed reaction from members of parliament, as well as economic and legal experts. The law, passed by a large majority in the People's Assembly last week, allows Egyptian and foreign investors to run airports for the first time in 40 years.

The new law came under fire not only from representatives of the leftist Nasserist and Tagammu parties, but also from some ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) MPs and even the liberal Wafd Party. The law's critics believe it could pose a threat to national security, because it not only gives investors concession rights to operate and lease airports for a maximum of 99 years, but also bans the confiscation of the airports' equipment and buildings under any circumstances. They also criticised the surprising speed at which the law was passed by the Assembly.

There was support for the law, however, from other MPs, mostly prominent NDP members and businessmen, who praised it as a progressive and bold step towards the privatisation of major infrastructure projects.

Tagammu Party MP Rafaat Seif told *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "The Assembly's bureau [steering group] surprised MPs by distributing the draft law just a few hours before it came up for discussion in a plenary session held at a late hour and in the presence of as few as 70 deputies." Seif argued that the law could lead to the increased influence of trans-national companies in the country. Such companies, he said, exercise increasingly hegemonistic powers, and in some cases are able to exert pressure that transcends the sovereignty of states, particularly third world states.

Sameh Ashour, the sole representative of the Nasserist Party, used harsh language to condemn the new law, describing it as a "complete infringement of national sovereignty and security." He complained that private investors would be allowed to operate airports for a maximum of 99 years, "while even in the most liberal days of the late King Farouk, concessions provided to investors never exceeded 30 years." In Ashour's view, the new law will negatively affect the security, sovereignty and economy of Egypt, and coming generations will pay the price.

Ashour caused an uproar when he accused the Ministry of Transport of insulting the Assembly. "Even before the law was passed, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), an affiliate of the Ministry of Transport, had published advertisements in national newspapers inviting investors to submit offers for the construction and operation of airports. In doing this, the ministry directed a clear insult to the Assembly," Ashour said. To the surprise of many listeners, Assembly Speaker Fathi Sorour agreed with him. "Such press announcements set a precedent," he said. "They are invalid and should not have been published in the newspapers."

Transport Minister Suleiman Metwalli, an MP for Quesna in Menoufiya Governorate, was criticised further when he argued that the objective of the published announcements was "merely to invite investors to submit their offers, while the final decision would be taken only after the Assembly's approval of the law."

At this point, Kamal El-Shazli, minister of state for parliamentary affairs, intervened and attempted to back up Metwalli, although with somewhat limited success. He reiterated that the submitted offers would be studied only if the Assembly approved the new law and emphasised that the state would uphold its right to closely supervise any airports built in accordance with its provisions. "State agencies such as the Interior Ministry, the tax and customs authorities, health and agricultural quarantine authorities, and the CAA will be all represented at the airport to ensure it does not pose a threat to national security," he assured.

Metwalli added that the selection of investors for private airport projects would rest with the cabinet, which would be another factor ensuring the preservation of national security. He also stressed that investors would also have to maintain the airport and its equipment, transferring it back to the government in good condition at the end of the agreed-upon concession period.

Ahmed Abu Zeid, leader of the NDP's parliamentary majority, argued that the airport buildings and related activities would be subject not only to national sovereignty but also to international laws and regulations. "In the world of today, there is no place for ideologies. It is interests that govern international relations," Abu Zeid said. And Yehia Abu Steit, an NDP deputy for Alexandria, asserted that "the world today no longer cares about slogans like 'foreign hegemony' and 'exploitative capitalism'."

Most NDP businessmen firmly supported the law, including Mohamed Abul-Enein, an appointed NDP member and chairman of Ceramica Cleopatra Group, who stressed that government agencies would maintain a presence in privately run airports, which would be monitored by armed forces radar, with flights and routes supervised and licensed by the CAA.

However, around five NDP members strongly objected to the law. For Mohieddin El-Kattan and Ismail El-Doadoa, NDP deputies for Kafr Al-Sheikh and Damietta governorates, the law revived the bitter experience of the 99-year concession granted to Britain in the 19th century to administer and operate the Suez Canal. "Despite my commitment to the NDP's policy, I completely object to this law because it reminds me of the Suez Canal problem," El-Doadoa said.

The law also did not go well with two independent members. Mohamed Marzouq, MP for Kafr El-Dawar, contended that the law "will open the door for the sons of Zion [Israelis] to fly freely in Egypt's skies. We should also not forget that the sons of Zion have already penetrated Egypt's security. They have been able to recruit spies from the Egyptian countryside and are behind all the current moral, religious and economic deviancies in Egypt."

Although members of the liberal Wafd Party had at first supported the bill, they decided to abstain from voting in the final debate. Yassin Seraggeddin, leader of the Wafd's parliamentary group, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that although the Wafd is a major supporter of privatisation, it maintains that this should not be realised at the expense of national security. "We first approved the law because Minister Metwalli promised that it would not apply to the existing international airports such as Cairo International Airport," said Seraggedin. "However, the government did not keep its word during the final discussions and we were surprised to discover that the law will also apply to existing international airports. I think it is a big shame for the government of Egypt to announce to the world through this law that it no longer has the capacity to operate its six international airports. It is a great shame again to lease such strategic airports to foreign investors whose objectives are unknown to us."

According to Seraggeddin, Article Six of the law also poses a threat to national security because it bans the confiscation of the airports' equipment and buildings for any reasons whatsoever. "We tried to impose some restrictions on this clause by allowing confiscation within the confines of judicial rulings, but NDP members objected on the grounds that this stipulation could frighten foreign investors away from Egypt," he said.

Atef El-Banna, a professor of constitutional law at Cairo University, also contended that the privatisation of major infrastructure installations and projects should be subject to national security considerations. "The construction of airports is a component of vital and strategic projects which should not be left to the mercy of foreigners, regardless of how friendly the relations between us are. If it is necessary, then the sell-off of airports should be confined to the Egyptian private sector."

When it came to the vote, the law was opposed by five members of the Tagammu Party; 15 other deputies abstained.



SWINGING HIGH. A cheerful group of girls celebrate the feast of *Eid El-Fitr* on a home-made *morgeha* (swing) *photo: Sherif Sonbol*

Islamists engage in 'popular diplomacy'

A group of opposition figures, mostly Islamists, visited Khartoum last week in what they claim was an attempt to defuse the tension between Egypt and Sudan. **Dina Ezzat** reports

A delegation of opposition figures led by Ibrahim Shukri, leader of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party, paid a five-day visit to Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, last week. Their mission, the delegation said, was to improve the deteriorating relations between Cairo and Khartoum and demonstrate Egypt's rejection of any attempt to separate southern and northern Sudan. The unofficial delegation also included representatives of the Liberal Party and the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, and leftist journalist Saad Kamel.

"It was very important for us to go," said Shukri following his return to Cairo, "because there are serious indications that the fighting in southern Sudan is threatening the unity of that country." And, bearing in mind Egypt's interest in the development of southern Sudan's water resources, the group made a point of "knowing exactly what was going on down there," Shukri added.

The delegation met senior figures in the Sudanese administration, led by President Omar El-Bashir and Hassan El-Turabi, leader of the National Islamic Front.

The traditionally close relationship between Cairo and Khartoum cooled dramatically in 1992 as a result of a dispute over the Halayeb border triangle. The Sudanese takeover of Egyptian schools and the Khartoum branch of Cairo University aggravated the situation and led to a war of words between the two sides. The deterioration in relations climaxed in June 1995 when Egypt accused Sudan of providing refuge for three men suspected of the abortive attempt on President Hosni Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa. Since then, there have been several unsuccessful attempts to improve relations.

Delegation members described their talks in Khartoum as "promising," but emphasised that efforts must be made by both sides if relations are to return to normal. "Every single official we spoke to clearly underlined the keenness of Khartoum to restore good ties with Cairo, but it takes two to make things work," said Mahfouz Azzam, a member of the political bureau of the Labour Party. Egyptian officials have repeatedly said that Sudan should demonstrate its good will by extraditing Mubarak's would-be assassins to face trial in Ethiopia.

Delegation sources suggested that the first step towards mending the broken fences should be an end to the media war between the two countries. And, since Sudan has a full diplomatic mission in Cairo, they urged Egypt to send its ambassador back to Khartoum. Since September 1995, the Egyptian Embassy in Sudan has been headed by a chargé d'affaires.

But it is the issue of the extradition of those thought responsible for the attempt on Mubarak's life which remains the principal obstacle preventing any improvement in bilateral relations, delegation sources confirmed. Mohamed Abdel-Qoddous, an Islamist journalist and member of the delegation, said Sudanese officials had denied that the three gunmen were in Sudan. These officials, he added, countercharged that Egypt had turned itself into a platform for Sudanese opposition factions.

Perhaps to avoid accusations of partisanship, members of the delegation made a point of meeting with officials from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry before travelling to Sudan.

A Foreign Ministry official, who asked that his name be withheld, confirmed that the ministry had been notified of the visit in advance but insisted that the ministry neither approved nor disapproved. "In their meeting with Ibrahim Shukri, Foreign Ministry officials discussed the situation in Sudan in general and explained to members of the delegation that Sudan has to start by ending its support for terrorist groups in Egypt," the official said.

For its part, Sudan is offended by Egyptian assertions that no troops from Eritrea or Ethiopia are involved in the war in the south, Abdel-Qoddous reported. Egypt has officially maintained that the war in southern Sudan is between opposition forces, bent on overthrowing the Bashir-Turabi regime, and the state's army.

"We know that mending fences between Egypt and Sudan is not going to happen overnight, but we are prepared to walk a long way," Shukri promised. He is planning to organise for more delegations to go to Sudan, and hopes that these visits will be reciprocated by Sudanese non-governmental delegations. "If official diplomacy fails to improve relations, then people's diplomacy should step in," he said.

The status of the Shukri delegation was questioned by Adel Abdel-Aziz, a Middle East News Agency correspondent in Khartoum, who claimed that "for the most part, the members of this delegation have financial interests in Sudan."

"While this delegation was given a red carpet welcome by Turabi and Bashir, it remained ill-informed," he said. "This delegation did not leave Khartoum. They did not get out to the war zone. What they said on Sudanese television is exactly what we read in the Sudanese official press".

Abdel-Aziz, who finished a tour of duty in Khartoum last week, was harassed by Sudanese security officials as he tried to board a plane back to Cairo.

'Doorknock' visit

A 48-STRONG delegation from the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt will embark on AmCham's annual 'doorknock mission' to the United States on 17 February. The trip, which will end on 7 March, will precede President Hosni Mubarak's visit to Washington early next month.

Addressing a news conference last week, AmCham President Shafiq Gabr said the visit is intended to boost American investments in Egypt and increase trade between the two countries. The delegation hopes that its efforts will encourage US businessmen to double their investments in Egypt, which currently stand at around $2 billion, he added.

According to Gabr, the visitors will spotlight Egypt's economic achievements and the strides it has taken in its privatisation programme. The delegation will highlight the incentives offered to investors and suggest a number of projects to the Americans, many of them located in Upper Egypt.

The delegation will include representatives from the financial, industrial, and agricultural sectors, and from tourism, the garment and textile business, and transport and communications services. In addition to businessmen, delegates will meet Clinton administration officials and Congressional leaders who shape America's Middle East policy.

Bizarre shooting

THREE men suspected of involvement in a bizarre shooting incident last Saturday near the home of Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri in Heliopolis were arrested less than two hours later at their homes in the suburb of Matariya. According to police sources, two of the suspects were planning to rob the contents of parked cars, and the third was the driver of the taxi used as a getaway car. The officials denied a report by the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), a London-based Arabic-language satellite television station, that the shooting had targeted Ganzouri's motorcade.

According to the official version of the incident, Khaled Khairallah Abdel-Hamid, a police guard posted on Al-Horreya Street in Heliopolis, spotted one of the three suspects loitering suspiciously in the area. Abdel-Hamid asked the suspect for his identity papers, and was told they were inside a nearby parked car. The suspect went to the car, but instead of producing the papers, took a pistol from the car and fired two shots into the air. The suspect then drove away at great speed. The guard fired at the escaping car, wounding the driver in the shoulder, and security forces immediately cordoned off the area.

Before arriving at his home, the driver had called at a local hospital where he was given medical treatment for his wounded shoulder. The doctor who administered the treatment was summoned for questioning over his failure to notify the authorities.

The suspects told interrogators that they had come to the area to steal the contents of parked cars, but were not aware that they were close to the prime minister's residence. They had chosen that area, they said, because it was particularly deserted in the early evening, the time when Muslims are eating *iftar*, the meal that breaks the daily fast during Ramadan.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**

Controversy over Coptic university plan

The would-be founders of a Coptic university insist that it will be open to all Egyptians, but critics fear sectarian undertones. **Mona El-Nahhas** reports

The idea of a Coptic university — the brainchild of 25 Coptic businessmen and public figures — was born after the government lifted restrictions on the establishment of private universities last June. The government's decision, part of a nationwide privatisation programme, has already resulted in the establishment of four private universities.

The Coptic Orthodox Church itself is opposed to the idea of a Coptic university, but the Coptic businessmen concerned have held four meetings at the Church's Scientific Research Bishopric to discuss ways of bringing the university into existence. The would-be founders insist the university will not be based on religious foundations and will be open to all Egyptians.

"The university will be open to both Muslim and Christian students, and the professors will also be Muslim and Christian," said Alfi Anwar Atallah, one of the group. "Our admission regulations will not differ from those at other universities, giving priority to students with the highest grades, regardless of religion."

Asked why the group had held their meetings at the Bishopric, Atallah replied that the setting lent a certain legitimacy to their discussions. "The Bishopric is a public place where Muslims and Christians can hold discussions of national issues," he explained, adding that later meetings were held in his office.

Atallah pointed out that many Coptic schools had been established, providing education for both Muslims and Copts, so there was nothing radical or divisive about the idea of a Coptic university. "We should not be accused of fomenting sectarian strife, bearing in mind that we already have an Islamic university, namely Al-Azhar," he said.

Sources close to the would-be founders said that the name "Coptic University" was suggested during preliminary meetings, but was later dropped after the project came under fire in an Arabic-language news magazine.

Atallah said the university plans to provide students with a high level of education and to meet the needs of society. The teaching staff will be drawn from national and foreign universities.

To begin with, the university will have only two faculties: desert reclamation technology and nursing, specialising in cancer and heart disease, with space for 600 students.

Four other faculties will be added later: the first for specialists in the treatment of drug addicts, the second for executive secretaries, the third for religious tourism and the fourth for Coptic studies. Mounir Azmi, another of the would-be founders, insists that the tourism faculty will cover both Muslim and Christian tourism, and the Coptic studies faculty will deal with all branches of Egyptology.

The founders hope that the university will open its doors to students in September 1998. The location has not been chosen yet but is expected to be at Badr City, one of a group of satellite cities around Cairo.

Another member of the founding group, Wasem El-Sisi, said Copts have been repeatedly accused during the past years of keeping a distance from mainstream society. "So we are launching this project to show that we are part and parcel of society, not simply a minority, and that we care about this society."

Students will be required to pay a mere LE1,000 in annual tuition fees, because the university will be a non-profit institution, El-Sisi said. It will be governed by Law 101 of 1992, which regulates the activities of private universities and provides for a minimum of government control. Under this law, plans for the new university, including a feasibility study, should be submitted to the Private Universities' Committee, an affiliate of the Ministry of Education, which has the authority to approve or reject the project. "I'm sure the government will not stand in our way and will approve the project very soon," El-Sisi said.

The total cost is expected to reach LE1 billion. The would-be founders say the capital will be provided mainly by Copts, although shares will also be sold by public subscription.

Opponents of the project, both Muslim and Christian, are suspicious of the possible sectarian undertones in the concept of a Coptic university. Mohamed Abul-Esa'ad, a professor of history and one of four Muslim figures who attended the last two meetings of the founding group, suggested that the plan be shelved for the time being. "We are against the establishment of any institute on religious foundations," he said. "We should seek a real Egyptian formula that has no sectarian roots and that aims at serving the public interest."

If the Coptic university is allowed to come to fruition, "then we should also allow the terrorist groups to have their own university, thus ensuring that sectarian problems will emerge," he argued, adding that the role of Muslims in a Coptic university was bound to be marginal and would be limited to financial aspects.

Educationist Hamed Ammar shared the view that the planned university would constitute a threat to national unity, and Saad Fakhri Abdel-Nour, the Coptic secretary-general of the liberal Wafd Party, also came out against the idea. "There is no need to differentiate between Egyptians according to their religion," he said.

Abdel-Nour suggested instead the expansion of the Coptic theology seminary to include new departments. "Thus students of theology would be able to study science in addition to religion." He insisted that Al-Azhar should not be viewed as a sectarian institution "because it is an important part of our national heritage and has special esteem in the hearts of all Christians."

Small enterprise promotion programmes, though not operating at their full potential, may be the necessary first step to self-sufficiency for thousands of young Egyptians

Entrepreneurial fever

Small enterprises may be the wave of the future but, experts say, they are still a long way from realising their potential. **Niveen Wahish** reports

Two years ago Wagdy Makram Naguib, who graduated in 1994 from the Faculty of Engineering, spent his time reading employment ads, sending out applications and trying his hand at a variety of jobs. Today, *along with two of his friends, he runs his* own business, the start-up capital of which came from a loan issued by the Egyptian Social Fund for Development (SFD) as part and parcel of its small and micro-enterprise promotion scheme. Along with the capital secured from the SFD, Naguib and his partners put in a comparable amount of LE8,000 each into the business.

"It took us a year to decide and actually set up our own business," recalls Naguib. "It was our last option after having lost *hope in finding a decent job.*"

But having the money to start their own firm does not necessarily mean that the road to prosperity is smooth or short. "Getting the loan was no easy task," said Naguib. Not only did they have to provide a sizeable collateral, but the grace period for the loan was quite short, meaning that repayment of the principal began well before their business truly took off.

Three months after receiving the funds from the SFD, the payments began. "We haven't even started doing business," complained the young entrepreneur. As it stands, he added, three months is barely enough time to find an office, buy the equipment and settle down, let alone secure a solid client base. "So far, all the money we earn goes to servicing the loan and covering our overheads," he said. So, when will the profits start rolling in? After two years, Naguib stated.

Since the mid-1980s, thousands like these *three entrepreneurs have taken* the same route to self-employment. Tired of struggling to get a foot in the door in a company where their salary would barely, if at all, cover their needs, small and micro-enterprises are rapidly becoming the sole feasible option for young graduates. And, said Naglaa Mortagi, secretary-general and founding member of the Youth Entrepreneurs Society (YES), such projects have saved many from joining the ranks of the perpetually unemployed. She is quick to add, however, that organisations such as YES would be better positioned to do their job if a national programme aimed at promoting and revamping the idea of small enterprises is adopted.

This kind of programme, explained Mortagi, would seek to boost and bolster the entrepreneurial spirit through education and the mass media.

"We need to develop an individual's entrepreneurial spirit and educate them on how to take the initiative and set up their own business," she stressed. But, "people still believe that a government job is the culmination of their goals and aspirations," laments Mortagi, adding that this mistaken *belief must be erased.*

Another aspect of micro-enterprises which must be upgraded, argued the YES secretary-general, is their performance. Although many of these businesses do provide much-needed employment opportunities, on the whole, they have not been successful in improving the living standards of those employed in them. Why? "Most of the available jobs in small and medium enterprises are low-paying opportunities," stated Mortagi.

Backing up her statements, Hamdi Abdel-Azim, a professor of economics at Sadat Academy, noted that statistics from the mid-1980s until the early 1990s reveal that small enterprises have provided about 300,000 jobs opportunities. "While this figure is not bad," he noted, "it could be better." The problem, however, is that roughly 60 per cent of such businesses employ less than 10 individuals each, meaning that their absorption capacity for labour is quite limited.

Moreover, he said, although small enterprises absorb around 55,000 unemployed workers per year, these jobs do not offer attractive salaries. "The average *annual per capita income of a small enterprise* employee is a little over LE2,000," noted Abdel-Azim.

Further exacerbating the issue, Abdel-Azim pointed out, is the fact that "over 60 per cent of small business are concentrated in the Greater Cairo area and, as a result, *they are not well distributed* around the country. And, he added, with their annual production level being quite small, their production costs are high, leaving little left over in terms of profits.

As a starting point to overcoming these problems, Abdel-Azim recommended that a specialised authority be created and placed in charge of providing young entrepreneurs *with technical assistance and* training to boost their businesses' productivity. These industries, he added, should also seek to complement rather than compete with each other. As such, they would be better positioned to carve out a niche for themselves as feeder industries and to employ a greater number of workers.

Other reforms that should be implemented, said Mortagi, are in the banking sector. A bank specially designated to lend *money to such enterprises should be set up.* The duration and terms of loans offered by this bank, as well as by other lending institutions, should also be extended and revamped to give these businesses a chance to stand on their feet.

These kinds of reforms, argue both Abdel-Azim and Mortagi, *are perhaps the* most prudent and direct methods of stimulating small and micro-enterprise development and growth in an era when economic and structural adjustment reforms are expected to lead to self-sufficiency for the country. But a major factor in realising these *reforms* will be the *roles played by* various private, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governmental institutions such as the SFD.

Since its creation in 1991, the SFD has sought to offset the costs of economic reform through programmes such as its Enterprise Development Programme, which aims at creating new jobs through small businesses and increase awareness of the role small enterprises play in economic growth.

The SFD implements its projects through the sponsor agencies ranging from NGOs *and banks and has, to date, succeeded in* providing over 59,000 temporary jobs and roughly 153,000 permanent jobs. The organisation's financing is mainly secured in the form of loans and grants from the Egyptian government, the World Bank's International Development Agency, the European Union *and other donor agencies.*

In addition to the SFD, various other projects, many of which are funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), are available for entrepreneurs. Among these is the Small and Micro-enterprise Development Project, which was set up in 1988 and has a capital of $44 million. The project, with the cooperation of local banks and institutions, seeks to provide credit facilities to SMEs.

Among the local institutions contributing to this project are the Egyptian Small Enterprise Development Foundation (ESED) and the Alexandria Businessmen's Association (ABA). Both these groups have reached operational break-even. Catching up with the ESED and the ABA is the Port Said Foundation, which entered the SME promotion and development field in 1995, *and the Assiut Foundation, which was re*cently established. Since the programme was launched, 103,800 loans, valued at LE293 million, have been issued to over 47,000 borrowers.

A second USAID-funded project is the Small Enterprise Credit (SEC) project, which saw light of day in 1991 with a capital of $36 million. The SEC, which is de*signed to increase an entrepreneur's access* to short-term credit and other banking services, is implemented through the National Bank for Development (NBD). To date, the project has given out 86,000 loans, valued at over LE225 million to 35,000 Egyptian entrepreneurs in the Greater Cairo area.



One of the small enterprises made possible by the SFD — *photo: Randa Shaath*

On borrowed time?

Mariz Tadros looks at the difficulties behind micro-enterprise development programmes

Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime, or so goes the old adage. Yet, more than a socio-cultural or economic cliche, this saying has found strong footing in the emerging trend which emphasises the development and promotion of small and micro-enterprises (SMEs). Egypt, already having taken decisive steps down the road to economic reform, is rapidly joining the ever-growing ranks of countries seeking to foster a brand of workfare over welfare.

Such projects, however, do not come cheap or easily. And, to that end, governmental agencies such as the Social Fund for Development (SDF), as well as local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foreign donor agencies have played an integral role in providing much-needed sources of funding by which single mothers, unemployed youths or destitute families are able to set up their own micro-*businesses using revolving loans.*

"All you need is time, a place from which to work and a good idea," explained Ashraf Hassouna, a consultant for the governmental SFD in Cairo.

The SFD was established in 1991 to counter the adverse effects of the government's economic reform and structural adjustment programme (ERSAP) on the poor. It is funded by both the government and international donors, most notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Income-generating projects — which target widows, unemployed youth and poor families — constitute a major component of its social safety net. Its community development programme provides loans ranging between LE1,000-LE7,000. According to Hassouna, the SFD is more "friendly to the poor" by virtue of the fact that no collateral or guarantees are necessary for loan eligibility. "And our interest rate (8-9 per cent) is lower than any other bank."

Despite the relative success of projects sponsored by *similar ogranisations*, in the field of SME development, there are no guarantees. Until now, Hassouna confirmed, no clear cut correlation between an increase in income and a higher living standard for women or their families has been established. In fact, he said, a few extra pounds could be the perfect formula for disaster: "A man may spend the profits to marry another wife *rather than to provide* clothing, food and education for his family."

Selling vegetable or needle work, as many new entrepreneurs have realised much to their dismay, does not necessarily loosen the chains of poverty. More likely, the recipient will continue to live in the same one-roomed thatched hut, struggle to *buy clothes and find affordable health care.*

"It must be stressed that we offer no radical solution to poverty through income-generating projects. These are only temporary measures until the government and the economy are better able to support themselves," Hassouna emphasised. He added that income generation does not make the government any less responsible for providing welfare services.

Critics have suggested that while some income-generating projects may be viable, most are not entirely so. Without high-level support, attempts to improve living standards for the marginalised through micro-enterprises will be futile, said Norbert Eder, *manager of the* micro-enterprise programme for the Friederich Ebert-Stiftung Foundation. What happens when NGOs pull out or move on? Without links with existing institutions, project failure is likely.

A second concern is cultural. Not all models or pilot projects can be universally replicated, and a local formula must be considered. The *Friederich Ebert-Stiftung* Foundation has, for instance, opted to work indirectly with micro-enterprises through the Federation of Egyptian Industries, co-operative unions and NGOs such as the Alexandria Association for Home Economics. Do they target the poor? Eder replied, "The purpose is not so much poverty alleviation as it is job creation for the lower-*middle class. We are hoping this would* have a trickle down effect in the long run and benefit the poorest sectors as well."

In the meantime, income-generating projects are meant to introduce social change by helping women become more financially independent. But if a woman is given a loan to start up her own sweet baking industry at home, whatever profit she makes *may have to be spent on debts*, children's needs or her husband's cigarettes. If her project is successful, it may mean more work for her and less work for him.

"Where you have very male-dominated households and a patriarchal society, it is really important to target women — but you must incorporate the men because *if* they feel they are being *sidelined*, they are going to take *over*. This is why it is very important to make sure that there are well-defined programme designs," explained Janice Stallard, Operations Research Manager for the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA).

One integral component of these pro*grammes is loan interest*. According to Stallard, such projects cannot be sustained without imposing interest (sometimes as high as 25 per cent). For many NGOs, this poses an ethical question: is it right to make money off a man or woman who are barely able to feed their families?"

Lately, the SFD along with several NGOs, has seen a market saturation with *traditional projects such as handicrafts*, cheap ready to wear garments and home accessories. This could exacerbate the situation, argued Stallard. Once someone thinks of setting up a little grocery shop, everyone wants one as well. The problem is that market saturation ensures project failure.

Marketing Link is a non-profit foreign-funded organisation which seeks to provide a permanent link between handicrafts producers in low income areas throughout Egypt and local and export markets. But, according to Link representative Mohamed Amin, finding unexploited market niches is no easy task. He said that the organisation's market niche basically depends on the 50,000 - 60,000 expatriates and members of different *foreign* communities in Egypt.

From their showroom in Zamalek, Marketing Link sells the products of nine NGOs, including the Women in Income Generation and Training Association in North Sinai, the Paper Recycling Project in *Moqqattam Hills, the Assuit Burns Pro*gramme Bead Workers Group, and the Nubian Heritage Preservation Association. In 1996 alone, the organisation raised LE100,000 in sales.

But with an eye on the future, more reforms, such as rigorous quality control and better marketing techniques are needed in order to increase the demand. Could operation costs then be recovered? Stallard offered, "We have a long, long way before we can be financially self-sufficient without needing outside assistance."

Big plans for small enterprises

A recent parliamentary study underscores the need to promote small and micro-enterprise development *as a factor of economic growth*, reports **Gamal Essam El-Din**

It is high time that a national strategy for the development of small industries is laid down, stressed members of the People's Assembly last week. After lengthy discussion revolving *around the role small in*dustries can and should play in the expansion of Egyptian industries, within the current framework of economic reform and structural adjustment, this conclusion came as the capping reference to a 140-page *study carried out* by the parliament on the issue.

The study, carried out by the Assembly's Parliamentary Research Centre, concluded that such a strategy is essential for the creation of more jobs, for the production of sufficient goods *to meet local* demand. Emphasis was also placed on how Israel was attempting to undermine the Arab world's industrial potential by flooding the market with consumer goods. "This dumping will only lead to a reduction of in*vestment in small-scale industries*," said the report.

Since the 1952 Revolution, said the study, Egypt has concentrated on medium and large-scale industries as the main driving force behind industrial and economic *growth. However, it went on to* note, this policy was generally realised at the expense of small-scale industries which represent the backbone of successful growing industries in the Third World.

"The result is that most medium and large-scale industries had to depend on foreign products for their needs, rather than creating a strong local network of small-scale feeder industries," said the report.

*In recent years, the study ob*served, many of the medium and large-scale industries have begun to show signs of "ageing" in terms of outdated organisational structures and management systems, slow and costly product development mechanism *and a lack of creativity. But* when the country, in a serious bid to revamp these industrial units in tightly-knit productive enterprises, turned to privatisation and liberalisation, it had to adjust its priorities, gearing them to small enterprises.

The parliamentary report divides *the small-scale enterprises into* two groups: the first is aimed at meeting a part of the demand for "finished consumer products" such as food, metal and wood (furniture), chemical industries (spices and insecticides) and household goods.

The other group, the report says, is the one which acts as an intermediary or feeder industry for medium and large-scale businesses. To a great extent, the study revealed, enterprises in the first group were able to realise their objectives mainly because they could accommodate the tastes, needs and *income of the* Egyptian consumer.

However, in its review, the study describes the general situation of the Egyptian small enterprise sector as poorly competitive, greatly lacking in its creativity and commitment to quality, as well as being plagued by a shortage of funds from both private and public sources, an unqualified labour force and inadequate technology.

The study attributes the existing *deterioration in small industries to a* variety of factors, foremost among the flooding of Egyptian markets with low-priced imports of feeding products demanded by large industries. The report stated that dumping has severely affected long-*standing Egyptian small industries* in the fields of furniture, leather products and electric fixtures.

"As a result, it is rare to see Egyptian handicraft products on any foreign markets," the study asserts.

The second reason listed is the *lack of government awareness* of the need to provide youth with a sound and advanced technical education. "Hopes are, however, pinned on the Mubarak-Kohl Programme to enhance technical education in Egypt and transfer the great German tech*nical and technological experience* to Egypt," the report said. The study also cited the competition between products of large-scale and handicraft industries as another reason behind the deterioration of small industries in Egypt.

The study concludes that although the problems confronting small enterprises are particularly complex and difficult, the state should realise that solving these problems in an effective and timely manner will result in accelerated economic growth and privatisation.

As the challenges facing Egyptian industry increase in the next century, an urgent programme should be drawn up to promote small in*dustries. This programme, the study* recommended, should primarily focus on establishing a special organisation for small industry development, and would officially take charge of supervising all kinds of small enterprises. This organisation *would also be charged with other* responsibilities, ranging from promoting the development of feeder industries to establishing a comprehensive information and statistical network on industrial production.

Other responsibilities include establishing a number of "project design" *offices*, and taking *the* necessary measures, in cooperation with the Social Development Fund (SDF), for providing small-scale industries with soft loans. The study also indicated that local city councils and municipalities should work together in providing young university and technical school graduates with the suitable sites for the establishment of small industrial projects.

Moreover, the Ministry of Industry should extend a helping hand in formulating the technical and ec*onomic conditions necessary for* granting small industries ISO quality certificates. The study also proposed establishing a national authority for technological design and application to provide small industries with the necessary scientific research.

Collateral for change

EVERY year, 700 new businesses are established in *Upper Egypt and urban poor areas*, according to Mohsen Kamal Abu Seif, economics director of the Coptic Evangelical Organisation for Social Services (CEOSS), a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Clients sign a blank cheque as collateral. Still, the delinquency rate (7 per cent) is high. What happens when clients don't pay back?

"We penalise them but we have never sent anybody to prison," said Abu Seif.

Grim tales of ideas gone sour, people gone bankrupt and carted off to prison have been circulating, not very openly though because it often involved the very NGOs as well as the SFD that initially provided them with the finance. Anything can go wrong, warned Abu Seif: "If you give money to a *very poor man to start his cottage industry, then* his son gets terribly sick, what do you think he will do with the loan money? Do you think we can hold him accountable for spending the money on his sick son?"

"The biggest problem I faced trying to set up this programme in Minya — an issue wherever we go — is the fact that not all people are entrepreneurs. Micro-enterprising is alien to most of us, let alone to the villagers. They do not see it as a loan, they see it as a debt which is something to be ashamed of."

Because income generating projects generally don't work on their own, CEOSS has them as part of a package deal that includes literacy classes, nu*tritional and family planning* awareness.

When all is said and done, concluded Abu Seif "cottage industries and micro-enterprises are not for everybody, nor are they necessarily the best solution. But we need to access them to those who believe they can make it, if only they had the financial and technical support for their ideas"

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

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Palestinians veto Beilin-Eitan document

Palestinians dismiss the Beilin-Eitan document on Palestinian final status as an internal Israeli issue, reports **Sherine Bahaa**

Israel's ruling Likud and the opposition Labour Party announced, two weeks ago, that they had reached agreement on a permanent settlement with the Palestinians. Widely known as the Beilin-Eitan deal, after the names of its two authors, Labour's Yossi Beilin and Likud's Michael Eitan, the agreement was outlined in a document entitled a "National Agreement Regarding the Negotiations on the Permanent Settlement with the Palestinians".

According to Yossi Beilin, an architect of the Oslo Accord who headed the discussions for Labour and an aspiring successor to Shimon Peres as leader of the Labour Party, the agreement "is going to change the Israeli polity." In an interview with *Newsweek*, Beilin described the deal as a compromise between the two rival parties of Israel. "If for the first time, the Likud agrees to have a border on the West Bank between Israel and the Palestinian state [the main, and perhaps the only difference, between the two Israeli parties since 1967] that is the end of difference," said Beilin.

The document discusses nine topics including borders, security, water, economy and education. However, the two sides failed to agree on the nature of the Palestinian entity so that more than one version of the document was suggested. While some prefer to grant the new Palestinian entity an expanded autonomy, others want to call it a state. However, among the most important points on which Knesset members agreed are keeping the settlements under Israeli sovereignty and rejection of the principle of a return to the 1967 borders.

Palestinians are deeply disappointed by the document. Hanan Ashrawi, Palestinian minister of higher education, dismissed the deal as nothing more than a compromise between Likud's extreme hardline position and Labour's position "which is already not entirely acceptable to us." In an interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Ashrawi said that the Israeli document is an attempt to impose Israeli domestic priorities on the Palestinian-Israeli talks. Ashrawi noted that it is ironic that the two major Israeli parties are negotiating with each other and not with the Palestinians.

Palestinians are adamant that they will not compromise on critical issues in final status negotiations. Taking Jerusalem as an example, Ashrawi said: "When we talk about Jerusalem, to us it is very clear that we are talking about East Jerusalem, occupied in 1967. We will not try to find an alternative or even re-define the city."

Knesset members, however, agreed in their discussions that Jerusalem will remain the united capital of Israel within its existing municipal borders. "The Palestinians will recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Israel will recognise the governing centre of the Palestinian entity which will be within the borders of the entity and outside the existing municipal borders of Jerusalem," the Beilin-Eitan agreement stated.

That leaves open a solution mooted some time ago in Israeli media reports in which it was suggested that the Palestinians would rule from the Arab East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Abu Dis. Abu Dis does not formally fall within the boundaries of Jerusalem as drawn by Israel. This suggestion was used by the Israeli media before last year's Israeli elections to bolster the Labour Party's popularity.

The Beilin-Eitan document triggered speculation over a previous secret document on Palestinian final status which was allegedly drawn up jointly by Beilin and the PLO's Mahmoud Abbas, also a principle architect of the Oslo agreement. The existence of such a document, however, was vehemently denied by Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, in an interview with the *Weekly* this week.

Ashrawi concurred. "There were discussions and they were carried out in a private capacity. Beilin may claim whatever he wants but he has been involved in many exercises of that ilk. They are what we call trial balloons or attempts at finding a political solution for himself and his group," said Ashrawi.

Abu Mazen called the Beilin-Eitan agreement catastrophic. "It does not present any kind of solution, only Israeli visions of the final issues that completely ignore UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 together with what has been agreed upon in the Declaration of Principles signed in Madrid," said Abu Mazen. He views the deal as the final stop of the peace train. "We will never discuss this agreement. If it is ever presented in any of the next rounds of talks, we will reject it and present our own view based on international legality."

Hassan Asfour, secretary-general of the Palestinian Authority, also denied any significance to the deal. "We, both as an authority and as an organisation [PLO], do not build our positions on Israeli domestic agreements. We do not care about the internal political discourse in Israel," Asfour told the *Weekly*. Asfour does not believe that the Beilin-Eitan agreement will be presented as a document in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. "We know quite well that papers are of no significance. This has always been the case since we started talking with the Israelis," commented Asfour. "There is an existing and signed deal between the two sides known as the Declaration of Principles. It established certain formulae for the final status negotiations based on the mutual political recognition of the two sides," he added.

According to Asfour, there are UN resolutions to address the issues supposedly resolved by the Beilin-Eitan agreement. "For instance, if we are going to talk about refugees, there is UN Resolution 194 which gives them the right to return or compensation to those who do not wish to do so."



Israeli military police forcibly evicted nearly 60 Jahalin Bedouin tribesmen, including this elderly man, from their encampment just below the Maale Adumim settlement, the largest of the Jewish West Bank settlements. The evacuation took place to make room for the expansion of the settlement. Several tribesmen were arrested as their belongings, including mattresses, boxes and furniture, were piled on the ground outside their shacks. Jahalin Bedouin have lived and grazed their animals for decades on land east of Jerusalem. A proposed alternative site near the village of Abu Dis, just outside Jerusalem, is too close to a rubbish dump and too rocky to graze sheep, according to tribe members. The 2,000 Jahalin in the Maale Adumim area are among tens of thousands of Bedouin living in Israeli-controlled areas. *(photo: Reuters)*

Israel's no-win options

While Netanyahu unequivocally rejected calls for a unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon, Israel's other option of digging in its heels is proving too costly. **Zeina Khodr** reports from Beirut

The mid-air crash of two south Lebanon-bound Israeli military helicopters has fueled an already simmering debate in Israel about the value of its presence in south Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu was quick to reject calls for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, however. "A withdrawal would bring Hizbullah terrorists closer to Israel's frontier. Israel must first stabilise the border before leaving the zone," he said. Israeli army chief-of-staff General Amnon Shahak said Israel would not leave since there is no other solution in sight for the time being. "There is a price to pay for security."

Lebanese leaders and officials of the Hizbullah resistance movement wasted no time in calling upon Israel to cut its losses and withdraw from the south and the west Bekaa Valley. "Israel should draw a lesson from the incident and realise it is time to end its occupation. The occupation is a painful wound for Lebanon and a bleeding one for Israel and it has cost her far more than all its wars with the Arabs," said Lebanon's Foreign Minister Fares Boueiz.

Opposition deputy and former Lebanese Ambassador to Washington Nassib Lahoud agreed, "A careful reassessment of the cost of the occupation, including the loss of Lebanese lives, should encourage Israel to honour Resolution 425 calling for an unconditional and immediate pullout from Lebanese territories," Lahoud said.

As news of the collision spread, many Lebanese, particularly members of Hizbullah, took to the streets. Residents in pro-Hizbullah villages congratulated each other, held special thanksgiving prayers and fired in the air in joy. The scenes were reminiscent of the celebrations witnessed in Lebanon following the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin over a year ago.

The celebrations were criticised by the American ambassador to Lebanon, Richard Jones, who said, "It is improper to rejoice at the loss of human life whatever the cause." His remarks angered some Lebanese officials, clerics, newspaper columnists and the public in general who feel that Israel always plans more attacks against Lebanese civilians to consecrate its occupation of the country.

Even before the mid-air collision, some Israeli officials were calling for a unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon in light of the military losses suffered. Nearly 200 Israeli soldiers along with scores of Israeli-allied militiamen in the south have been killed since 1985. Twenty-seven Israeli soldiers were killed in 1996 and four this year, three of them in a Hizbullah bomb ambush earlier this month.

Since the beginning of the year, violence has spiraled out of control in the south. Resistance attacks causing Israeli casualties have prompted fierce Israeli retaliatory shelling, the worst since the Israeli wide-scale offensive against Lebanon in April. The upsurge in violence coincided with Israeli threats to bomb southern villages where resistance guerrillas operate.

Officials here have been urging caution, explaining that there are dangerous signs on the ground. "I think the Israeli government is trying to change the parameters of the peace process and the situation on the ground. It refuses to respect the principles of the Madrid conference," Boueiz told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. He rejected Israel's proposal of peace for security. "We want a clear commitment from Israel that it will withdraw to internationally recognised boundaries."

Boueiz described as vague and unacceptable recent Israeli offers to withdraw provided adequate security guarantees were agreed upon and without necessarily signing a peace treaty or normalising relations.

Lebanon and Syria, its close ally, have already rejected two other proposals for withdrawal presented by the right-wing Israeli government. These were the so-called Lebanon-first proposal, while the other called for the deployment of joint Egyptian-Jordanian and possibly Syrian troops to replace Israeli forces. "The proposals were never presented to Lebanon. They aim at driving a wedge between Beirut and Damascus in the hope of reaching a separate deal with Beirut," Boueiz said.

While debate continues in Israel, bloodshed in south Lebanon continues. Less than a week after the helicopter crash, seven Israeli soldiers were wounded in a resistance attack, and observers here are predicting further escalation in the fighting.

Military warns Refah

Angered by growing pro-Islamist sentiments, the Turkish military sent a message to the country's Islamist leader — secularism is here to stay, reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

The Turkish army flexed its muscles last week in the town of Sincon, 40km west of the capital, Ankara. These movements were the latest in on-going power struggles between the Islamic-led coalition and the Turkish secular elite.

The military show, 15 armoured tanks cruising the main streets of a town known to be an Islamist stronghold, was the culmination of a series of warnings made recently by the Turkish military. The military establishment is charged with the constitutional and moral obligation to uphold secularism in Turkey. In the last few weeks, Turkey's secular elite have repeatedly expressed growing concern about the ruling Refah Party's (RP) attempts to Islamise the country.

According to sources close to Refah, the party has been trying to push Islamisation as far as it can.

"The party leadership has been under pressure by its electorate to get on with the Islamisation it promised in its election campaign. At the same time, it has been trying to create a balance between its Islamic voter-base and secular forces," a source told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Toward this end, Turkish prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, rearranged office hours for civil servants during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, announced plans to build a grandiose mosque in Taksim, Istanbul's main tourist area, and demanded that female civil servants be allowed to wear head coverings to work — a practice that was banned by the founders of modern, secular Turkey. To compound matters, at a recent public meeting commemorating 'Jerusalem Day,' the Iranian Ambassador Reza Bagheri made statements suggesting the introduction of *Shari'a* in Turkey.

In an attempt to avoid the wrath of the secularist armed forces angered by moves to increase the Islamic influence on Turkish society, Erbakan has chosen to tone down his rhetoric and attempted to mend ties with the secular elite.

In what was seen as a concilliatory gesture, Erbakan told a rally of supporters on Sunday, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, that "the adoption of the secular state has made possible the reconciliation of religious freedom in the country with a pluralist, political democracy."

According to local newspaper reports, a Turkish military spokesman was quoted as saying: "Those yearning for *Shari'a* seem to be engaged in a futile drive to erode the Turkish armed forces. These plans will definitely be frustrated."

Radical, an Islamist-oriented newspaper, reported that there was a confidence crisis between the military and Tansu Ciller, deputy prime minister and foreign affairs minister. According to the publication, their relations "have reached a breaking point," reportedly because of Ciller's failure to check Islamist influence within the government. Ground Forces Commander Hikmet Koksal reportedly told his top aides "The time we have given Tansu Ciller has expired. Now, is that one [Ciller] any different from the RP people?"

Some observers argue that the army is growing nervous about Refah's ultimate intentions.

"It is wrong to hold the coalition government responsible for the actions of Refah officials. If Refah continues to challenge the secular order in Turkey, it will eventually face the military," Professor Birol Yesilada, head of the Turkish Studies Department at the University of Missouri, told the *Weekly*.

He pointed out, however, that unlike the early '80s, the officers are not eager to carry out a coup d'état. "They would rather resolve the current crisis democratically. In other words, the opposition will bring down the current coalition with support from some of the True Path members and this will presumably be followed by a secular coalition."

Turkish newspapers reported last Saturday that initiatives were under way to create a coalition that would bring together the Motherland Party (ANAP) and Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) — which is a member of the present ruling coalition with Refah.

Mesut Yilmaz, leader of the ANAP, said that opposition parties and some DYP members are filing a censure motion against the Islamist-led government. Parliament is expected to debate the motion, which is effectively a no-confidence motion, on 25 February. "Turkey's democratic and secular republic is exposed to a serious threat under this regime," Yilmaz told reporters earlier this week.

It has been reported that 15 DYP deputies will present Ciller with an ultimatum shortly. A DYP member was quoted by the *Yani Yuzyil* newspaper as saying, "either she will sign a new, stricter coalition protocol with RP or end the RP-DYP coalition."

However, Ciller, responding to the criticism, was quoted as saying that "this government will remain in power until the year 2000." Furthermore, an alliance with Refah in the next election is also a possibility, according to Ciller.

Some observers say Refah and Erbakan will come out stronger than expected, especially if the secular democratic parties fail to overcome their differences. They believe Refah will continue to grow in power and challenge the secular state more and more.

But Yesilada believes that "unless RP revises its own image, and becomes something like a democratic religious party with no inclination to bring about *Shari'a* in Turkey, it will continue to be seen as a threat to the secular state. Under such conditions, there is no room for compromise and the military will continue to oppose its rise, fueling speculation about another coup."

Playing it safe

Erbakan may seem ambivalent, writes **Sebai Mohamed El-Sebai**, but his priorities are clear

Visits exchanged between Iranian and Turkish leaders, and the agreements Turkey has signed with Israel, on one hand, and Iran, on the other, have left observers somewhat confused. Where is Turkey headed?

Nejmeddin Erbakan is the first Islamist to head the Turkish government in over 73 years. He came to power at a time when developments and changes within Turkish society were at a peak. When Erbakan established the National Command Party on 26 January 1970, he effectively pulled the Islamic rug from beneath the feet of the Justice Party.

Erbakan's party managed to play on Turkey's Islamic legacy without explicitly mentioning Islam, as the Turkish Constitution stipulates. But the coup of 12 March 1971 put an end to the short-lived National Command Party. In 1972, Erbakan was back with the National Security Party which participated in the government coalition for the first time in January 1974. Again, this and other parties were overthrown on 12 September 1980. Finally, Erbakan established the Refah Party on 19 July 1983. In both local and legislative elections it brought Erbakan returns. His popularity went up from 4.4 per cent of total votes in 1984 to the leading position in the December 1995 elections, at which the party raked in over 21 per cent of total votes.

Erbakan's three parties have all made reference to Islam as the pillar and source of life, order and justice. Refah may serve as a tool of Islamic rejuvenation in Turkey, but it acts within a secular framework and is committed to the political game. This game itself, and the Refah platform in particular, reveal five main goals underlying Turkish foreign policy: the establishment of an Islamic commonwealth; the formation of an organisation for joint defence strategies; a common market allowing economic cooperation among the world's 1.5 billion Muslims; a common currency opposing the hegemony of the US dollar; finally, the establishment of an organisation for cultural cooperation.

In considering these goals, the Turkish premier, an Islamist within a secularist system, must take several factors into consideration. First, the military establishment, which played the major role in the Kemalist movement, is entitled by the Constitution to safeguard Kemalist or secularist principles.

The various political parties established after the demise of the single-party system (the People's Republican Party in 1945) must also be taken into account.

Third, the influence and power of the business class expanded tremendously during Turgut Ozal's open-door policy. This led to a marked growth spurt in the Turkish economy during the 1980s. The latter part of this decade and the early nineties, however, witnessed heavy economic deterioration and the spread of corruption.

The Kurdish Workers Party and the Kurdish autonomy movement in general have tended toward militant opposition to the state since 1984. This has taken its toll on the economy and affected relations between Turkey, on the one hand, and Syria, Iran and Iraq, on the other.

Erbakan also faces a potentially explosive situation in Cyprus. Finally, his ambivalence toward the Turkish-Israeli military agreement signed on 23 February 1996 may have cost him dear. Erbakan initially opposed the agreement, even pledging to cancel it after his ascendancy to power. Nevertheless, days after his government obtained parliament confidence, he backtracked, admitting that political realities dictated the modification of the principles that had brought him to power.

Turkey is keeping all its options open. The military agreement will make it possible to exert pressure on Syria, which Turkey accuses of supporting and training elements of the Kurdish Labour Party. It is also a clear message to Iran.

Turkey has signed sixteen similar security agreements, most with NATO countries, in addition to Arab countries like Egypt.

Since the overthrow of the Demirel government after the coup d'état of 12 September 1980, two diverging lines have run through Turkish foreign policy concerning Israel and the Arab world, one favouring strong relations with Israel and another supporting the boycott or, at least, maintaining minimal relations. Throughout the eighties, relations with Israel were stagnant, despite Ariel Sharon's secret visit to Turkey in the summer of 1986. After Madrid and Oslo, however, diplomatic activity escalated and ambassadors were exchanged.

One trend inside Turkey holds that cordial relations with Israel will benefit their country in a number of domains, such as combating Kurdish armed activity and developing tourism between Turkey and Israel. Jews living in Turkey play an important role in this connection and Israel is encouraging this trend. Three of its satellite channels are devoted to Turkish transmission, and agricultural cooperation projects are underway, particularly in south-east Anatolia, where Israeli bywords have been applied: less land, less water, more production.

Turkey's policy toward the West, while sometimes ambivalent, has remained conciliatory on the whole, as the issues of the northern Iraqi Kurds and customs unification with the EU indicate. Yet Erbakan has not forgotten the Islamic card. The exchange of top-level visits with Iran underlined his Islamic orientation. Economic projects in the offing could improve Turkey's economic situation, expand relations with Iran, and reinforce security on the borders. Erbakan is also attempting to devise a common economic policy with Iran through the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and its permanent committee for commercial and economic cooperation.

Erbakan's visit to Iran was the first he made outside Turkey after his appointment as head of government. The deteriorating economic situation and Turkey's compelling need for fossil fuels from the central Asian republics, Caucasia, and Iran may have been taken into account. The Refah programme also prioritises Turkey's Islamic orientation. Erbakan himself, while in Iran, stated: "Turkey will not allow a third party to interfere with the process of cooperation with Iran." The Turkish media also announced that Turkey refused to reveal the text and protocols of the agreement on gas signed with Iran to the US.

The Turkish-Israeli agreement was one item on the negotiation table between Erbakan and Rafsanjani during the latter's visit to Ankara. During the talks, Erbakan downplayed the importance of the Turkish-Israeli military agreement. On his visits to Egypt and Libya in October 1996, he again stressed that the agreement was devoid of any strategic dimension.

Erbakan has also discussed the formation of an Islamic bloc. Whether or not this bloc will materialise remains to be seen. But for the time being, Turkey's Islamic orientation may benefit more than one neighbour.

The writer is director of the Oriental Studies Centre at Cairo University.

Although our series of Ramadan debates has come to an end, opinions will continue to differ. Below are two takes on the "clash of civilisations", and further remarks on culture, politics, power, discord and uncertainty. While deconstructionism, it appears, may serve as a fruitful way of understanding the hybrids all cultures have become, it is also argued that postmodernism is just the old wolf in culturally specific clothing

Which West was that?

The clash of civilisations is just another construct, writes **Edward Said**. Reductionist and simplistic, it is the predictable product of an intellectual at the service of the last global superpower. But who says conflict is inevitable?

I gather that Samuel Huntington's recent book on the clash of civilisations has been causing a good deal of discussion (and fun, I hope) here and there in the Arab world. His article on the same subject, which appeared three and a half years ago, seems to have stimulated more discussion than his ponderous, overwrought book *has done in the United States*, partly because the essay was short, had a catchy title, and was designed to shock his readership into some response at least. By contrast, the book has the plodding graduate student manner of someone wandering all over the place on uncertain territory, trying to be careful with things like definitions, "facts," and statistics, while filled with trepidation at his professor's imminent ire.

There are so many things wrong with the premises of Huntington's argument (for example, that civilisations exist the way he says they do, as vast and permanent blocks, rather like icebergs), so many embarrassing mistakes about the way cultures operate, so many infelicitous descriptions of what distinguishes the West from Islam, or Confucianism, or anything else, and at the same time so unexamined and uncritical a set of assumptions about the unique glory of Western civilisation, most of which nonsense went out with Montaigne and Hume, that it is genuinely hard to read him with serious attention.

Strangely enough, his shortcomings are most striking in his discussion of his *own* civilisation, the West, although it is plain enough that what he says about Islam, for example, is full of material borrowed from discredited Orientalists like Bernard Lewis. Huntington's fundamental mistake is to perceive the West as possessing an unchanging essence, a kind of absolute core which remains as it is from century to century. He says that civilisation is comprised of the major books, heroes, values that are central to it; this then forces him to take the position that everything about the West confirms these essences and values, as well as vice versa, a determinism that scarcely allows for diversity of change in the real sense of both those words.

My own reading of the West places emphasis not on the permanencies and essences that give Huntington such evident pleasure, but on the discontinuities and disruptions in it, as in all cultures and civilisations, in addition to all the various mixtures and hybrids that in fact compose cultures and civilisations. The authoritarian and dogmatic interpreter will, like Huntington, see Socrates as an important historical figure whose method, metaphysical inquiries into the true and the good, constitute one of the permanent glories of Western civilisation. To a genuinely brilliant and imaginative reader like Nietzsche, what made Socrates interesting was that, by his methods and "his great rolling critical eye" he was a disrupter of values, an overturner of accepted ideas, someone who threatened all authority. This is clearly why Socrates was put on trial, condemned, and was left with no recourse *but to take his own life*.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that one of the key elements of modern Western culture was the emergence and dominance of philosophies such as those of Nietzsche, whose great thrust was in fact the overturning of even the ideas of good and evil, and the attempt to eliminate any faith in the concept of a stable *identity*.

For Huntington, civilisations have a fixed and constantly, perpetually recognisable identity, whereas the proper critical question to be asked at the end of *the twentieth century is "which West, or Islam,* or Confucianism do you mean? There are dozens, all of them in conflict, irreconcilably opposed, endlessly in flux. Is it really possible to speak of the West, or of one Confucianism, since the evidence of extraordinary diversity within each culture wreaks immediate havoc on any attempt to reduce the culture or civilisation to a simple, unitary phenomenon?"

A second mistake running through Huntington's whole book is that he does not at all take seriously the extent to which all cultures, as well as civilisations, are mixed, hybrid, full of elements taken from other cultures. So much so, in my opinion, that it really is intellectually irresponsible to argue as if there was a pure, unmodified culture that is totally at one, self-identified with itself. Nothing could be more fruitless than seeing the West as somehow standing apart from and above the civilisations of Africa, Islam, India, and Latin America. True, there are specific ideological attempts in all cultures to pretend that some pre-existing essence defines the culture once and for all, but that is ideology, not history or the serious interpretation of culture.

I happened the other day to be reading about a new book on the emergence of calculus whose argument was that that indispensable mathematical tool sprang full-blown in the 17th century and emerged simultaneously in Leibnitz and Newton; according to the author, this amazing occurrence was a direct consequence of Greek science suddenly reappearing in the 17th century. I would call this an ideological, rather than a true historical interpretation of what happened. To eliminate from this description of "Western" scientific genius any mention of the crucial role played by Arab mathematicians, without whose work *neither Leibnitz nor Newton could have formulated* calculus, is to try to maintain the fiction of a pure, self-enclosed West, whose dominance and power are entirely its own, and whose history in the final analysis has no real connection with any other culture or civilisation.

Huntington's equivalents exist in all cultures today as a consequence, in my view, of *nationalism*, or at least that aspect of nationalism that is defensive, xenophobic, and politically amenable to the kind of manipulation that has produced ethnic and religious conflict as well as partitions of multi-cultural societies into separate little entities that can snarl at each other across their barbed-wire borders. Huntington himself writes from the point of view of someone who wants to manage such conflicts: he is an intellectual serving the interests of the last super-power (and he is actually *quite frank about this*) whose pre-eminence in the world he is set on serving and maintaining.

The real subject of his work, therefore, is not how to reduce the conflict of cultures, but how to turn them to American advantage, as a way of conceding to the United States the right to lead the whole world. Yet none of his grandiose rhetoric can conceal the fact that *this style of thought* derives from the same polluted source to be found in all cultures, the notion that my way of life, my traditions, my way of thinking, my religion or civilisation can neither be shared with anyone nor understood by anyone who does not have the same religion, colour of skin, etc. India, Pakistan, Bosnia, Ireland, South Africa, Lebanon, and of course Israel-Palestine bear the ravages of such a logic, which *in the end leads to more, not less, narrowness,* misunderstanding, and violence.

The point of course is that there is nothing inevitable about these *ideas, despite what Huntington and others* like him have been preaching. Although he shares very similar ideas with right-wing Zionists who believe that they have a superior right to the land of historical Palestine and are prepared to battle Palestinians until doomsday, he is taken more seriously because the United States has greater power than any other country today, a fact which scarcely validates the soundness of his argument.

No culture today is pure. Huntington writes about the West as if France was still made up exclusively of Duponds and Bergeracs, England of Smiths and Joneses. This is fundamentalism, not analysis of culture, which, it bears repeating, is made by humankind, not decreed once and for all by an act of divine genesis. Every identity therefore is a construction, a composite of different histories, migrations, conquests, liberations, and so on. We can deal with these either as worlds at war, or as experiences to be reconciled. *It is* one of the prerogatives of power historically to classify lesser peoples by placing them in eternal categories — the patient Chinese, the servile Black, the devious or violent Muslim, are well-known examples — that condemn them to solitude and apartness, the better and more easily to be ruled or held at bay. This *is precisely what the "separation" of Arabs from Is*raelis is all about, in the past and during the peace process. Is that the only way for civilisations to coexist?

I think not. Another way of using difference in culture is to welcome the "other" as equal but not precisely the same. Most of the great humanistic scholars of *our* time, from Erich Auerbach to Joseph Needham, Louis Massignon to Taha Hussein, saw in the past and in different cultures an opportunity to overcome the alienation of time and distance. Reading Dante, Auerbach caught that poet's relationship to the 14th century, as well as to our own. The idea, therefore, is to study culture not nationalistically, but in order to understand how it is made, and how it can be re-made for others. In this it is the critical humanist or intellectual, not the Huntingtonian crisis manager, who has something to offer, as well as a more authentic vision of the possibilities for human community.

I have spent thirty-five years of my life teaching young people the arts of interpretation, that is, how one reads, understands and connects the products of human culture with other human activities. This has enabled me, *I think*, to understand politics better, since *interpretation teaches one that all human activity takes* place in history, is of history. The goal of interpretation, in my opinion, is to learn how to connect things with each other — different cultures, different peoples, different historical periods. That is an act of choice, the very opposite of the choice made by Huntington and others in the West and in the Islamic world, *to see cultures in terms of opposition and clash*.

The clash of civilisations thesis is presented as if it is inevitable, whereas of course it is imposed upon a world filled with uncertainty and potential as well as actual discord. But we always have a choice to work for conflict, or against it. We must not be fooled by Huntington's martial accents that we are condemned to ceaseless strife, because *in fact we are not*.



Culture of helplessness

Postmodernism is merely a new twist on an old tale, writes **Sherif Hetata**: Unity at the top, fragmentation for the dispossessed

Never before in human history has there been such concentration and centralisation of capital in so few nations and in the hands *of so few people*.

The countries that form the Group of Seven industrialised nations with their 800 million inhabitants control more technological, economic, information and military power than *the some 4.5 billion people* who live in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

Five hundred multi-national corporations account for 80 per cent of world trade and 75 per cent of global investment. According to *Forbes* magazine, in 1995 there were 388 billionaires in the world. In 1996 there were 447. *Their combined wealth is estimated at 450* billion dollars — more than half the total earnings of the inhabitants of the globe.

With this concentration of economic and technological means of power in the hands of a very few, the revolution in telecommunications, transport, and informatics has served to plunder the majority of the world's *inhabitants, especially* in the South. The term plunder, however, is no longer used. More inviting names are used: aid, or free trade, or investment, or sustainable development, or structural adjustment.

This change in names is a part of the post-modern cultural game.

Post-modernism is described by Fred Jameson as *"the cultural logic of late capitalism"*. *This cultural* logic has many aspects. We may focus here on the three main aspects related to the cultural processes of post-modernism: "globalisation", "fragmentation" and "surrender".

To expand and globalise the world market, the multi-national corporations resort to economic, political and military means. But their task *is made easier if* people can be convinced to think, feel and therefore act in ways which will promote the global market. *Culture can help the global economy* to expand and reach out to all corners of the world.

It is possible for the media to create a single North-South world today. To expand the global market, a culture of "consumerism" must be developed on a global scale, a culture which plays its role in developing certain values, patterns of behaviour, perceptions of happiness or success, and attitudes towards sex and love. Culture must shape a "global consumer" with an overwhelming desire to buy. It must develop new needs, a cult of pleasure, *of material possession*. It must address all ages, all members of the family; it must make women sex objects and men modern *hunters*.

Thus the media produce and reproduce the culture of violence and sex, the quest to satisfy immediate needs, fleeting pleasure, quick enjoyment, the excessive, and the pornographic, in order to keep the global economy rolling.

The post-World War II years were a period of hope for many. There were those who believed in socialism and thought it was being built in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe or in parts of Asia. There were those who believed in democracy and freedom and thought they were on their way to achieving them. Asia, Africa and Latin America seemed on the path to total independence.

Today, most of these hopes have collapsed under *the assault of global transnational imperialism*. Loss of hope, the failure of national democratic and progressive movements, the difficulties of the economic situation and especially the attack launched by a global system on what people perceive as their interests, their history, their culture, their identity, and their nations: all of these have bred a movement of resistance.

*In the absence of perspectives for the future, how*ever, people will tend to fall back on what they know, cling to the familiar, the reassuring, the heritage that makes them what they are, the things of the past.

Rather than a change forwards, the reaction is backwards to the closed family and its values, to the closed community, the tribe, the race or ethnic group, religion, tradition. Back to everything which seems to be identity, which differentiates from the "invading other". Rather than being open, people close up like oysters, become divided, fight tooth and nail against each other.

Confronted by a global assault, instead of uniting against the common danger, people build up destructive barriers and fortifications, attitudes that divide them, political and cultural movements which are separatist and retrograde. They revive ways of thinking, norms, attitudes of intolerance and discrimination in the name of religion, tradition, culture, race, or identity. They resist the "invading other", seeking hope in religion, the repetition of history, su*perstition or metaphysical chimera. They think in* terms which fragment and disconnect; they seek absolute truth to replace the uncertainty and fluidity of the present.

These are the main reasons for the revival of ethnic, racial and religious movements, their essence and their message. But behind them lie concealed the economic forces which try to take advantage of divisions, conflicts and confrontations, in order to protect their interests and expand their power.

All economic systems, all economic powers must have their "ideology" even if they themselves have declared an "end to ideology". They must have their *thinkers. The soldiers in this standing army describe* themselves as "post-modern", to indicate that the era of "modernism" is now over.

Amongst these "thinkers" are people like Samuel Huntington, for whom economic interests or ideology are no longer the motor of history. Instead, he posits struggles between eight world civilisations, at the forefront of which we find first Christian (read "Western") civilisation, to be protected against the hordes of Islam (read Arab), "Confucianism" (read China), Hinduism (read India), etc. On the basis of this analysis, he makes an appeal for the West's "political and mil*itary revival" in order to face the Islamic threat, and* for the enhancement of NATO's military strength. This post-modern "Crusade" serves the purposes of the multi-nationals very well. It can conceal what is happening in the world, channel the struggle against the global hegemony exercised by the 500 multi-nationals into a "clash of civilisations", mobilise peo*ple behind Western neo-colonialist policies, provide* Western capitalism with a new enemy to replace communism and offer a handy pretext for an even greater production and sale of arms.

Other post-modern thinkers like Bernard Lewis and Francis Fukuyama have developed theses along similar or related lines. Some of them, however, including Fukuyama, exhibit a greater degree of subtlety and sophistication than Huntington, and deal with a wider range of issues.

Many of these ideas have been percolated into the writings of the Egyptian and Arab elite and have been adopted in a modified form. They transform the struggles taking place in our region into issues of culture and civilisation. Our differences with Israel become a "civilisational challenge" and a "competition between civilisations", the Gulf War becomes a war over values of "civilisation and freedom" rather than oil, and a conference to be held in Cairo forces us to choose between "clash of civilisations or cultural dialogue".

Of course, there is an element of truth in whatever *analysis or thesis one produces. The trick is to com*partmentalise our thinking, to separate the "cultural" from the "economic", the values of "humanism" and "democracy" in our region from the question of "oil".

This is one of the important ways in which post-modernist thinking leaves the issues by the wayside. It prevents us from seeing what is really happening, and sends up a smoke-screen of seemingly very complex and learned "discourse".

Today, on the world scene, we can observe two movements or tendencies: a movement towards economic, political, military and informational concentration and centralisation, to the advantage of the very *few at the expense of the very many*; and a second movement, taking place below, of fragmentation and division coupled with marginalisation and pauperisation of peoples, mainly in the South, and to a much lesser extent in the North.

The movement towards a "global culture" might seem to be contradicted by the other movement towards division, fragmentation and cultural strife.

To a certain extent it is, and yet at the same time it is not. The two movements, in their essence, complement each other to serve the very restricted hegemonic few at the top. They are two faces of the same coin, *combining to unify economic, political, military and* informatics power in the hands of a minority at the top. To rule from the top, you have to fragment at the bottom.

To maintain a global hegemony in the hands of a tiny minority over thousands of millions of the earth's peoples, unification must take place at the top, not at *the bottom. The people must remain divided,* confused, fragmented. Divide and rule is an adage as old as historical time.

Religio-political movements in our part of the world would seem to be in conflict with Western global hegemony, and sometimes they are. But there are quarrels in all families. The United States, France, Britain and Japan have their quarrels. But not over fundamentals, not over the multi-national system as such.

The Islamic religio-political movement, as it stands today, with its banks, its companies, its trade in arms and other items, including drugs, or gold, or currencies, its businesses and political headquarters in Geneva, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, the Bahamas — all these are an integral part of the global economic system. The Gulf countries, Arab or otherwise, buttress this movement with their petro-dollars. They were active in Afghanistan and still are. They opposed every democratic, patriotic movement in the Arab world. Despite occasional conflicts, they have been and continue to be supported by the West, or considered as an alternative *when* other Western-supported regimes have done their time.

The politico-religious movement is another manifestation of the post-modern era in which we live. Islamic thinkers, analysts, intellectuals are almost always another, if cruder, face of post-modern thought. For them, the cultural has precedence over the economy and is separated from it. Even if they oppose the so-called West, they conceal what goes on behind the scenes, the flow of money in the unified network of global interests which maintains the multinationals at the top.

The anti-Western "popular" religious movement has different interests from those of the leading forces. *It is a genuine protest movement*, but instead of looking forwards, it continues to gaze into the past. That is why it is being used to other ends by those who control it from above in the struggle for power or money. The post-modern thinkers of Islam, of its culture and its civilisation, do not speak to us of that. Unwittingly, or sometimes by intention they are part and parcel of the post-modern net.

Postmodern thought, therefore, serves to maintain the global hegemony of multi-national capitalism through two seemingly opposed *cultural* tendencies: the unifying, global consumer culture, and the frag*menting effect of cultural identity or multi-culturalism* directed to the peoples of the world especially in the South. Both these tendencies serve a single aim. To maintain and develop global capitalism as it is, the cultural must be divorced from the economic, the political and the military in order to conceal what is going on.

But post-modern thinking as it has developed, mainly *in the West, is also an ideology of apathy and help*lessness. It devitalises and paralyses resistance by destroying inter-connectedness in the name of diversity and richness. It fragments knowledge in its attempt to study more clearly what is specific and local. It transforms the world into an extremely rich but disconnected kaleidoscope. These strategies may be considered some of its merits; chaos can sometimes be positive and unpredictability can open the way to knowledge, but post-modernism also propagates conceptions which deprive people of their capacity to struggle against global capitalism and so change the world.

For if we are living the end of history, as Francis Fukayama contends, how can we think of the future, or learn from the past? Is he not saying that our world — the world ruled by the multinationals, by an erroneous concentration of money and power, and knowledge — will remain as it is? If we are witnessing the "end of theory and ideology" as *Michel Foucault, Jaques Derrida* and other post-modern thinkers maintain, how can we gather facts and knowledge into some coherent whole, even if this whole is to be replaced by other frames of thought and conceptions in the future? If, with Michel Foucault, we are witnessing the "end of representation", how can people organise groups, institutions, unions or parties to struggle for their rights? It we are living the death of the author as Roland Barthes says, are we not left with lifeless texts divorced from human endeavour?

All these "ends" or "deaths" deprive people of their means of struggle, their capacity to resist. They mean the surrender of history, theory, *ideology*, *authorship* and representation to neo-colonial global capitalism as weapons with which to defend itself unopposed so that *it can propagate its own* ideology, its history, its theories, its forms of representation and its own authorship at will — so that it can continue to drown us in a never-ending avalanche of fragmented, disconnected facts about the world while it keeps its hands firmly on the reins of power and knowledge, leaving us to swim in the net like schools of helpless fish.

The writer is a novelist, political commentator and physician. He returned recently from the US where, for four years, he taught a course on "Dissent and Creativity" at Duke University, North Carolina.



Laurent-Desire Kabila's Democratic Alliance for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire break into song. Kabila's forces control a strech of land over 1,400 kilometres long *(photo: Reuters)*

Spoiling for plunder

The battle for the huge spoils of the Great Lakes region of Africa is well under way, writes **Gamal Nkrumah**

Power relations in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa are in a fluid state. There is an uneasy feeling in many quarters that armed insurgents are being used by some mysterious masterminds in a big and complicated game for the control of the rich, albeit little exploited, resources of the region. The United States, France and a handful of African regional powers are suspected of being the puppeteers behind the scenes. The unspeakable suffering of the people of the war-torn region is an international outrage. Most observers warn of worse to come. Can something be done before the real bloodletting in the streets of Zaire's capital, Kinshasa, begins?

The phenomenon of armed insurgencies continues to spread across the region, creating chaos and havoc in its wake. The reasons are legion: political instability, a lack of democracy, gross violations of human rights, widespread poverty, a hunger for land, massive unemployment, rapidly deteriorating health care and educational systems and pervasive corruption in high places. Foreign forces, too, have a hand.

It is in this context that reports seeped in the Western press of Egyptian involvement in the region. Last week, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa stated categorically that Egypt had neither troops, military advisers nor personnel in the region. "We are keen on maintaining the unity of the lands in the Great Lakes region, including that of Zaire. Egypt does not want to interfere and give military aid [to either party]," Moussa told reporters in Cairo.

Moussa stressed that Egypt is committed to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all the states in the region as stipulated in the charter of the Organisation of African Unity.

"The Great Lakes region encompassing Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, southern Sudan, eastern Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi, is of critical importance to Egypt," Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Marwan Badr, who went on a tour of the Great Lakes region a few months ago, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "However, Egypt will never interfere in the internal affairs of the countries of the region," Badr added. Reports in the Western press, including one by the British-based *Guardian Weekly* that eight Egyptian military advisers were flown out of the eastern Zairean town of Bunia aboard an emergency relief plane are misleading, warned Ambassador Magdi Hefni, assistant minister for African affairs.

It was in Morocco, and not in Egypt, that Mobutu's bodyguards, the elite presidential division, were trained. Even Morocco now refuses to come to the rescue of the embattled Mobutu regime. Last week, Mobutu went to the North African kingdom to solicit military support in the form of arms, ammunition and mercenaries. His Moroccan hosts politely declined the ailing Zairean president's request. In the past, Morocco often sent troops to put down anti-Mobutu rebellions in Zaire.

Zaire, like many other states in the region, lacks the military means to fight disciplined and well-armed rebel groups. This last point, the rebels' weapons, begs the question of who actually arms the rebels

Documents discovered by a British journalist in a bus in an abandoned Hutu refugee camp in eastern Zaire show that the UN arms embargo against the former Rwandan regime to punish it for the slaughter of half a million ethnic Tutsi was not impermeable. In fact, it was evaded by a British arms sales company, the British-based Mil-Tec Corporation. Mil-Tec sold to the former Rwandan regime and Hutu militias $6 million worth of weapons between 17 April and 13 July 1994. One letter requested the former Rwandan minister of defence to pay debts totaling some $2.5 million. It read, "We have supplied your ministry for more than five years. You will realise that we have gone all out of our way to assist your ministry in times of need." The documents list dates of consignments, purchases delivered and their costs. Five weeks after the slaughter engulfed the country, Mil-Tec continued to send huge shipments of weaponry in spite of the UN embargo. According to Ama Biney, the editor of the London-based *Africa World Review*, the invoices show that Mil-Tec sent the ousted Rwandan regime rifles, ammunition, grenades and mortar bombs via Israel.

Weathering the international outcry that followed revelations that Western arms companies were involved in the Rwandan blood baths of 1994, these very same Western arms exporters are now doing brisk business with the militiamen of the refugee camps in eastern Zaire. Britain is today the world's second largest arms exporter after the US. Other opportunities for selling arms might be in the offing as armed rebellions and civil wars rage in southern Sudan, eastern Zaire and northern Uganda and Burundi. The trouble is that the arms companies are playing a deep game in Africa in which Western governments seem to be out of their depths.

Meanwhile, the UN has requested international help of about $300 million, including over $40 million of the Red Cross' Special Emergency Appeal, for refugees. Following the storming of the Rwandan capital Kigali by forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) three years ago, a mass exodus of Hutu refugees fled the country. France and Zaire rushed to the ousted Hutu regime's assistance. Over 2 million Rwandan Hutu refugees fled to neighbouring countries, most to eastern Zaire.

The bloody chain of events quickly led to the eruption of civil war in eastern Zaire and the return of a million Hutu refugees to Rwanda. Some Rwandan refugees failed to follow the homeward flow most of their compatriots took last December. With close to a million internally displaced Zaireans and 500,000 Rwandan refugees and militiamen at large, there is a refugee crisis at hand which demands millions of dollars in emergency relief. Last week, the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid Emma Bonino, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, visited the region and both are now busy mobilising funds for the refugees.

The moral case for the provision of emergency relief to the displaced people and refugees is as valid as ever. Well-targeted assistance is sorely needed today. The proportion of aid to the world's poorest countries from the richest nations is today the lowest in 45 years. Direct aid by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries of the South was $95 billion in 1995, nine per cent down from 1994. Over 40 per cent of direct OECD aid goes to Africa, 30 per cent to Asia and 10 per cent to Latin America. British assistance to developing countries was slashed by 12.5 per cent in the past two years and stood at $5.2 billion in 1996. Britain now contributes 0.28 per cent of its gross national product in aid to poor countries, while America provides some rather dubious backing to Rwanda and Uganda.

There is no more apt historical parallel with Rwanda's deputy president and minister of defence, Paul Kagame, than Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni. Will Laurent Desire Kabila and John Garang follow suit in Zaire and Sudan? It is too early to say whether Kabila and Garang will follow in Kagame and Museveni's footsteps. What is clear is that they are all personal friends, political allies and ideological soul mates. "Ethnicity is not the problem. It is social underdevelopment," Museveni said recently. Uganda today has a six per cent economic growth rate and in last year's presidential elections Museveni won 74 per cent of the vote. The White House in Washington approves, but the Elysée Palace does not. Shelving French rancour will not do.

France has been repeatedly humiliated in the Great Lakes region since 1898 at Fashoda, in modern day southern Sudan. At Fashoda, the British halted French colonial advances in the region. In 1994, French political, economic and cultural influence suffered another setback with the triumphant return of the Anglophone Rwandan Patriotic Front from Uganda to their ancestral homeland.

A peaceful solution to the Great Lakes crisis must seek a common ground between Washington and Paris. Washington may be edging towards a possible deal with Paris over the Great Lakes region. France must stop sending mercenaries to fight on Mobutu's behalf. Washington and Paris may have begun to sketch out the shape of a new compromise over the region. Egypt is doing nothing of the sort — it has neither the capacity nor the inclination to be so presumptuous.

Cypriot conundrum

The multi-million dollar deal between the Cypriot government and a Russian arms supplier is as much about politics as about trade, writes **Abdel-Malik Khalil** from Moscow

A geopolitical and regional conflict is brewing in the eastern Mediterranean. The intensity of this conflict heightened last month when the Greek Cypriot government signed a multi-million dollar missile contract on 4 January. The Greek Cypriots will acquire air defense systems — S-300 missiles — from the Russian missile supplier, Rosvooruzhenie. Precedents to the latest deal include the purchase of 50 Russian-made T-80 tanks, in August 1996. Turkey and the Cypriot Turks are alarmed.

In 1974, after an abortive coup in Nicosia led by supporters of union with Greece, Turkey invaded the island to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority. Since then Cyprus has been divided in two, with the Turkish Cypriots occupying the island's northern third. Some nine years later, in 1983, an independent Turkish Cypriot republic was declared, but Turkey was the only country to recognise it.

The National Cypriot Army is the main armed force of the Greek Cypriots and counts about 10,000 troops. It is badly equipped and has neither an air force nor a navy. The Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, have an army numbering between 10,000 and 15,000 troops. Until very recently, the Turks had an overwhelming military superiority. The occupation force, the so-called Turkish Expeditionary Corps, with more than 30,000 troops equipped with several hundred American-made M-48 tanks, was the strongest force on the divided island.

It takes seven minutes for Turkish planes to reach Cyprus from Turkey's Anatolian coast. From continental Greece to Cyprus, it takes about 25 minutes. Therefore, the Greek Cypriots want air defence systems that balance the Turkish air superiority. "The reason the Greek Cypriots want [to buy Russian missiles] is that they are upgrading an airfield and feel they need air defence capabilities to protect it," said Ken Petrie, a defence analyst at the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies.

The Russians insist that S-300 air defence systems can successfully compete and even surpass the American "Patriots", the system widely used to intercept missiles launched by Iraq into Israel during the Gulf War. More importantly, the Russian systems cost one and a half times less than the American "Patriots". The S-300 missiles boast an effective range of 145 km and can easily reach targets in southern Turkey.

"I want to make it clear that Turkey will not allow escalating threats against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and itself," said Inal Batu, a senior Turkish diplomat. Before the contract was signed, Yannis Cassoulides, spokesman for the Greek Cypriot administration, stressed that Cyprus is an independent state and will decide on matters related to its defence by itself.

Athens supports the Greek Cypriots unequivocally. Greece is Nicosia's traditional and natural ally. Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Simitis told reporters in Athens that by purchasing this system, Cyprus will not only boost its air defence, but will also strengthen its bargaining position in negotiations with Turkey over the fate of its occupied territories. Greek Cypriots, including President Glafcos Clerides, deny that they have any other plan than self-defence in acquiring the S-300 systems.

Ankara argues that these missiles pose a threat to Turkey as they can reach the southern part of the country. Turkish officials say that peace can only be achieved by the demilitarisation of Greece's Aegean Sea islands as well as southern Cyprus. "We could do what we did in 1974," Turkish Defence Minister, Tuhran Tayan, warned recently. He was referring to his country's invasion of Cyprus.

Relations between Ankara and Moscow have always been tense. Turco-Russian geopolitical rivalry goes back a few centuries. This week, Dmitry Trenin of the Moscow office of the Carnegy Endowment for International Peace said that Russia and Turkey, while maintaining strong commercial links, are increasingly in competition over Caspian Sea oil and over influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia. "Turkey is seen, by and large, as a challenger in geopolitical terms," Trenin added.

Greece, on the other hand, is regarded as a potential political ally of Russia. The US suggested that a moratorium be declared on using both Turkish and Greek air forces over Cyprus. The Americans were trying to prevent Turkey and Greece from coming into conflict since they both are NATO members. "We would just as soon see this deal not go forward because we believe that it does threaten to raise tensions in the region and that it represents a qualitative jump in the military capability on the island," said American State Department spokesman Glyn Davies last week. Britain, the US and the United Nations Security Council condemned the Russo-Cypriot deal stressing that it could upset the peace process aimed at reuniting the island.

In response, Moscow argues that the West does its best to prevent Russia from expanding its arms market. Lev Rokhlin, chairman of the defence committee of Russia's State Duma, accused the West of trying to regularly "oust" Russia from the international arms market. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian annual arms sales slumped from a peak of about $20 billion to about $2 billion. According to the Interfax news agency, they had risen to $3.4 billion in 1996 while the United States stood at $7.5 billion.

Viktor Ilyukhin, the communist head of the Duma's security committee, called US criticism "unacceptable" interference and "a jealous attempt to prevent Russia from earning money." Some observers say that the sale of the S-300 is motivated by purely commercial interests. "If you look at what Russia is up to now regarding aviation and submarine sales and so on, it is purely commercial. There is a desperate need for hard currency and this is a ready way of trying to boost their reserves," Petrie of the International Institute of Strategic Studies stated.

As relations between NATO and Russia are rather stormy, it is difficult to imagine Moscow doing anything to help the NATO allies. With the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, Russia lost its protected arms market. Now it is trying to regain one. Thus, Dmitry Morozov of Rosvooruzheniye said Russia started a new marketing policy on 1 February. The idea is to penetrate markets in Asia, Latin America and the Arab countries. He also told reporters: "The goal has been declared that Russia should catch up with the United States in total arms export by the end of the century." The head of Rosvooruzheniye, Alexander Kotyolkin, called Russia's recent sale of military helicopters to Colombia a great success against US competition. In fact, arms sales bring not only huge profits, but political influence and prestige. Deputy Director of Rosvooruzhenyie Mikhail Timkin seemed very optimistic concerning Russian arms sales: "We will push [the competition] and most of all the US, further over the horizon because our equipment is better and more competitive than Western equipment."

Previously, Russia exported arms mainly to China and India. The contract with Nicosia represents the first step for Russian penetration of the markets controlled by the West. As learned from the Gulf War experience, the demand on air-defence systems will grow. There are only two countries capable of producing such systems — Russia and the United States. An intense competition for the arms markets is in the offing.

Settling accounts?

Even before this week's verdict finding OJ Simpson liable for the deaths of his wife and her friend, the American public, predominantly white, had already condemned the ex-football star, writes **David Du Bois**

How could justice be served twice? This week, a jury found former Buffalo Bills star OJ Simpson liable for the deaths of his wife, Nicole Brown, and her lover, Ron Goldman. Over the Christmas holidays, Simpson was given custody of his two children — Sydney, 11, and Justin, 8. Simpson's fortune is estimated to be around $11 million. Whether he now has the money to fend for them is quite another question.

Polls show that America is as racially divided as ever. A *Time*/CNN poll revealed that while 68 per cent of whites thought that Simpson was financially liable for the deaths of Simpson's wife and her lover, only 18 per cent of blacks thought so. According to a *Newsweek* poll 82 per cent of blacks said Simpson should keep custody of his children. Only 44 per cent of whites thought that he should keep custody of his kids. Most blacks and many whites agree, though, that the latest verdict could only increase racial tensions in America.

The Christmas court decision giving Simpson custody of his children had produced yet another reaction of rage from the families of the murdered Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman and those Americans who persist in their conviction of the guilt of OJ Simpson, despite the verdict to the contrary that concluded the criminal trial. California state law is very tough on legal attempts to remove children from their natural parents if there is clear evidence the parent wants and is able to care for the child. Having been found "not guilty" in the "Trial of the Century", the judge found no reason to deny OJ Simpson custody.

Despite the unanimous decision of the jury in the criminal trial, and for many white Americans because of it, there continues to be debate throughout America, among blacks and whites, over whether OJ Simpson committed the murders. What concerns many Americans and particularly black Americans was the public reaction to the verdict. Racist and sexist viciousness was openly expressed in press, TV and radio commentary at the time, to condemn the predominantly black and female jury of 12 — including three non-blacks and two men.

That commentary reflected what most white Americans felt. The jury had been intellectually unable to deal with the scientific evidence provided by the prosecution and was assumed to harbour a pro-black, anti-white bias compounded with a "feminine emotionalism".

Few commentators, whether white or black, want to deal with the extent of white male fear of black male retaliation for the rape and unpunished ravaging of black women by white men since the days of slavery. This hidden truth lurks in the background of the OJ Simpson drama.

On the national, white, underground information network the story goes: "If, before the whole world, black OJ Simpson can marry a white woman, ravage her and then toss her aside for other white women and get away with it, every black male in America will consider that road of retaliation, and many will take it." This explains America's obsession with the continuing OJ Simpson drama. This is the motivation behind the civil case. The families of the murdered victims and their supporters were thwarted in their attempt to have OJ Simpson convicted in the criminal trial. Having now lost their bid to have his children taken away from him, they intend to ruin him financially. At the same time, they want to discourage other blacks from following in OJ's footsteps.

The unspoken and unspeakable truth about the OJ Simpson drama is the white male guilt it engenders for the wholesale violation of black women by white men during the days of slavery and throughout much of America to this day. To know just how "wholesale" this violation has been and continues to be, count the number of "café-au-lait" African Americans you know or have seen on television or in films, beginning with OJ Simpson and his family. Nearly a century ago, in 1906, sociologist-historian-activist WEB Du Bois wrote that out of the nearly 10 million blacks recorded by the US Census Bureau, he believed through study and wide-scale observation that nearly one-third had "recognisable traces of white blood".

The number of indigenous interracial US families has never been ascertained. But its prevalence is undeniable, particularly throughout the southern states. In colonial times, before the creation of the nation, white indentured servants and black slaves and free black persons often married and had families. Later, the practice was outlawed, allegedly because of the difficulty of determining the legal rights of the off-springs.

With the creation of the nation, under slavery and beyond, the overwhelming number of cases of such relationships were between white males using coercion and threat and black women in no position to resist. Many such relationships were not characterised by overt coercion but were consensual only in the sense that there was no overt resistance by the powerless black woman. In some sections of the South, notably in Louisiana, well-to-do white males openly kept black and mulatto (mixed black and white) mistresses, and in some cases two distinct families — one white, one mulatto. Then, there were those relationships between marauding, reckless, devil-may-care white males and "loose" black women or black and mulatto prostitutes.

The majority of today's African Americans are the progeny of these various kinds of interracial, intimate physical relationships.

The much smaller number of relationships between black men and white women were most often solicited surreptitiously by white women, fearful lest their men learn of the liaison. This practice was the justification for the wave of lynch mob murders of black males in the South that swept the nation from 1890 through to the 1930s. Most often the black man were falsely accused of raping a white woman. With the threat of a rape charge by a rejected white woman hanging over his head, the black male often submitted to the solicitation.

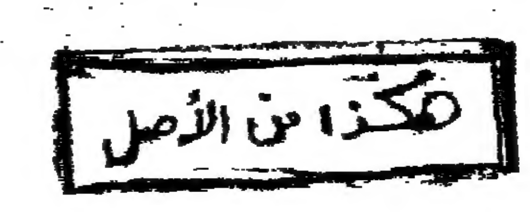
The issue of mixed-race liaisons almost always resulted in tragic consequences for both the mother and the child. The true tragedies, however, were those relationships that dared not reveal a mutual respect and love to a condemning society ruled by racism. There must have been many of those over the nearly 500 years of America's coming of age.

It is the image of the black male with the white female that conjures up these memories among white males today. These memories of the freedom their fathers and grand-fathers had with black women date from the time the first twenty Africans were landed at Virginia from a Dutch warship in 1619. But today, these memories are accompanied by the image of the big, bad, angry, threatening, black male typified at its most menacing in the black-garbed, gun-toting Black Panther Party member of the 1960s, that the media, television and Hollywood films consistently portray. The objective is to associate street crime in America exclusively with black and brown (Latino) males.

As I wrote in these pages at the beginning of the criminal trial, OJ Simpson's mistake was the flair with which he lived his life with Nicole Brown in southern California. This, together with his natural good looks, his wealth and his popularity, made it appear to many white males that he was flaunting his ravaged white conquest in their collective face as a kind of retaliation.

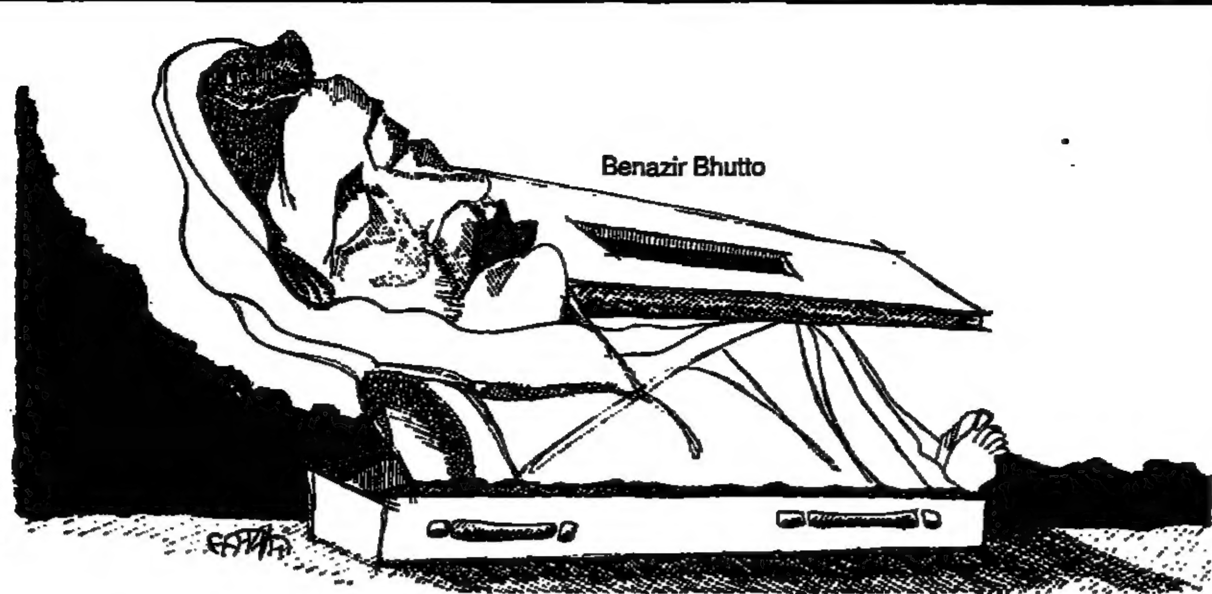
In Los Angeles, this media-hyped behaviour surely engendered murderous rage within the law enforcement community. Its hatred for black and brown Americans is demonstrated daily in South Central Los Angeles and has been revealed to the world by the video-taped police beating of black motorist Rodney King and by the taped racist and sexist venom of the prosecution's chief witness in the criminal trial, former Los Angeles policeman, Mark Fuhrman.

The OJ Simpson drama forces the American people, black and white, to confront their far more numerous and complex "secrets and lies" about race and sex than the brilliantly realised characters of the fine British film of that title on the same subject could ever imagine. This explains its continuing fascination for the nation.



هكذا من الأصل

Bhutto's tragedy, Sharif's challenge



A landslide victory brought Nawaz Sharif to power. Will he advance Pakistani democracy? Eqbal Ahmad writes

With five national elections in a decade, it is as though Pakistan is making up for decades of military rule. The latest elections, on 3 February, will be remembered as a watershed for the crippling blow it dealt Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and for the power it invested in the Muslim League led by Nawaz Sharif.

In the 217-member Pakistani parliament, Sharif's party now holds 134 seats. Even in Sindh, Bhutto's home state, the PPP won only 36 seats in the 100-member assembly while the League claimed 15 seats in a state where its following had been negligible. In the North-West Frontier and Baluchistan, Bhutto's party won a paltry four and five seats respectively.

Benazir has denounced the elections as "massively rigged". "I have been cheated," she says, "not defeated". Mercifully, she promises not to start, "for the time being", an extra-parliamentary agitation to oust the elected government. The voting was closely monitored by several foreign delegations, including some from the European Commission. None has found her allegations of massive rigging credible. While noting defects and occasional irregularities, all have certified that the voting was fair and transparent.

Bhutto did, nevertheless, face a hostile environment during the three months that followed the dismissal of her government by President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari, a PPP leader and Bhutto nominee. Allegations of corruption against herself and her husband Asif Zardari were widely publicised. Zardari was incarcerated first on charges of corruption, then for the murder of Benazir's estranged brother Murtaza Bhutto. Murtaza's Palestinian wife Ghinwa Bhutto pointedly separated from Benazir and joined her opponents. Above all, Pakistan's Supreme Court, with which Benazir had been at war as prime minister and to which she had appealed to restore her government, dragged out the hearings on her writ petition. Suspense over the court's ruling blunted the edge of the electoral campaign. The court's judgement upheld the president's dismissal of her government. Neither the court's ruling nor its timing — days before the elections — were meant to aid Ms Bhutto.

Since the trial and execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979 by his military protégé General Mohamed Ziaul Haq, his defiant daughter had benefitted greatly from public sympathy. Playing on victimisation became integral to Benazir's political style. This time, however, the old magic did not work. During the electoral campaign popular disaffection with the PPP was palpable. The great crowd pleaser was unable to attract and excite the crowds as she had done in 1993. My visits to several polling stations in Lahore, Punjab's capital city and once a People's Party stronghold, confirmed this. At each station, the party's tents were nearly empty, its forlorn cadres complaining of the alienation of their traditional constituents: "We have been sending cars to fetch them. They won't come." In Islamabad, university students who were canvassing for the People's Party reported similar scenes of voter alienation. At 37 per cent, the voter turn-out was the lowest ever. Most abstentions were ascribed to the PPP's traditional constituents.

Sharif will be prime minister with a majority that no other prime minister has enjoyed before. Therein lies his promise but also his peril. He confronts difficult challenges. First of all, there is the crucial matter of developing stable working relations with the president. Pakistan's political instability has been defined largely by two factors: an unresolved tension between the viceroyal and parliamentary traditions of government and the inability of the civilian polity to tame the warrior caste.

This legacy is colonial, compounded by the rise of the post-colonial elite. Britain bequeathed Pakistan with two contrasting traditions of government. With the viceroy at its apex, the colonial structure of power had rested on three pillars: the bureaucracy, the military and the landed gentry playing second fiddle. The higher levels of the bureaucracy and army were at first entirely British but were gradually indigenised so that by the time of decolonisation Indians/Pakistanis had replaced them. The latter played a central role in shaping post-colonial Pakistan.

The viceroyship was an authoritarian state, centralised, rigidly hierarchical, well regulated and dedicated to the efficient and orderly accumulation of surplus. Yet, as Britain ruled India in the age of liberalism, the parliamentary tradition also infiltrated the colony. Its carriers were English liberals and, more importantly, Indians educated in English schools in India and Britain. They founded the institutions and movements that popularised modern liberal values and contested the presumptions of colonial rule. These ideas, however, were unevenly distributed. They struck deeper roots in regions which had been colonised earlier, such as south, east and central India. Their roots were shallower in areas which were colonised later, or which Britain regarded as too strategic to be exposed to what Lord Macula described in mid-19th century as "the literature of revolt." The north-western region that is now Pakistan came under colonial rule a century or more later than south, east and central India. Given their proximity to Russia, Iran and Afghanistan; given also their insurrectionary cultures, these areas were regarded as strategic preserves of viceroyal rule.

The viceroyal style of government was reinforced in Pakistan by three post-colonial factors. First, the nationalist movement which brought Pakistan into existence had shallow roots in the region where the new state was founded. Secondly, its founding fathers died early. Mohamed Ali Jinnah in 1948 and Liaquat Ali Khan four years later. In India, by contrast, Jawaharlal Nehru's generation of nationalist leaders survived long enough to legitimise and consolidate parliamentary rule. Thirdly, with the deaths of Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, senior bureaucrats and military officers, the heirs of the viceroyal legacy, acquired influence and entered into a military alliance with the United States. With the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Military Assistance Programme (MAP), the US embarked on a programme of making anti-communist allies out of post-colonial states. This development insured the ascendancy of the viceroyal elite in Pakistan. At crucial moments in Pakistan's history, the military-bureaucratic elite intervened to frustrate the democratic process. Therefore, half of the country's fifty years of existence have been marked by martial law. Military rulers, however, eventually faced popular resistance and the country balanced between dictatorship and democracy.

As expected, the landed gentry divided its time and manpower between collaborating with and opposing authoritarian rulers. Zulfikar Bhutto is a case in point. He entered politics as a protégé of Pakistan's first military ruler. For years, he served as Marshal Ayub Khan's minister of commerce, then as foreign minister. Later, he became opposition leader, only to be allied with General Yahya Khan's regime during its military operations in East Pakistan. He eventually succeeded Yahya as Martial Law administrator after the secession of Bangladesh and became prime minister of a constitutional government over which he presided in a manner befitting a military dictator. Following a wave of public protest over alleged vote rigging, he was ousted in 1977 by his hand-picked army chief, Mohamed Ziaul Haq. The latter imprisoned, then executed his benefactor and ruled Pakistan until he died in 1988.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had applied viceroyal practices to the parliamentary government with six constitutional amendments that conferred unusual powers upon the prime minister. Eventually Ziaul Haq proceeded to democratise this military rule by allowing for an elected prime minister. However, he also amended the Constitution to invest in the president, i.e. in himself, the power to dissolve elected governments. As president, Ziaul Haq used the 8th Amendment once to dissolve the government of Mohamed Khan Junejo. His successor, Ghulam Ishaq Khan used it twice to dissolve the governments of Benazir Bhutto (1990) and Nawaz Sharif (1993). In these three instances, the judiciary gave contradictory rulings, twice circumscribing the 8th Amendment. In the latest instance, the Supreme Court has more than denied Ms Bhutto's appeal. It augmented presidential discretion to dissolve elected parliaments. Meanwhile, the president promulgated an ordinance creating a decision-making body made up of the president, military chiefs, the prime minister and ministers of defence and finance. This Council of Defence and National Security (CDNS), as it is called, is yet another attempt to wed the viceroyal and democratic systems of government to the benefit of the former.

In brief, the events of the last three months — the president's dissolution of Bhutto's government, the judiciary's seal of approval for his intervention and the creation of the CDNS as an extra-parliamentary decision-making body — have vastly augmented the unelected president's power. At the same time, Nawaz Sharif's overwhelming electoral victory offers a counterweight to the reinforcement of the viceroyal system of power. This dialectical development enhances the risks of collision. After all, the prime minister can dismiss the CDNS. He is also within reach of the two-thirds majority needed to repeal the 8th Amendment. Principle and a sense of history apart, he would not want to be twice the victim of the 8th Amendment. So the temptation will be there, but the timing could be wrong. As Winston Churchill said of the victorious Tories in 1895, "like a huge ship with powerful engines," Nawaz Sharif's government "will require careful steering" if it is to evade a destructive collision.

Prime Minister Sharif's other challenges are those of most Third World governments. He has promised reforms and economic revival. To fulfil these promises even half-way, he must establish priorities, avoid flashy options and take difficult, sometimes unpopular, decisions. The state in Pakistan has expanded beyond rational proportions. It must contract to reduce the enormous government deficits and also to introduce a modicum of efficiency in administration. The external debt has reached risky levels and eats up a large portion of the annual budget. It must be rescheduled and retired as expeditiously as possible. The banking sector is disturbed by bad debts, over-staffing and mal-administration. It begs restructuring and streamlining. Ditto for the tax system. Pakistan is another country in which the poor pay much in taxes, the rich very little and the landed elite not at all. Pakistan's infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Some essential services such as the railways have in fact deteriorated; they must be modernised and expanded.

The social sector has suffered from neglect and the rapacity of the elite classes. Genuine and functionally planned land reform is overdue as without it the country will continue to be hampered politically, economically and culturally. An overwhelming majority of citizens remains illiterate, without access to potable water, health services or habitable shelter. For them to become fully productive citizens, serious action must be taken to ameliorate their extreme deprivation. Above all, the system of higher education has collapsed in Pakistan. Consequently, the standards of creativity, management, leadership and governance are declining drastically.

In foreign affairs, Nawaz Sharif has promised to seek peace with India, review his country's policy in Afghanistan and mend relations with Iran. Here, too, he may come under powerful, if invisible, domestic and foreign pressures. With Benazir Bhutto's assistance, he won a historic and enviable victory. Will he now make history on his own?

Paying for past sins

The Swiss authorities welcomed the establishment of a humanitarian fund for Holocaust victims, but the issue is far from settled, reports Gamil Ibrahim from Geneva

Three Swiss banks have announced that they will set aside $100 million for victims of the Holocaust. Despite this positive initiative, however, the rift between some Jews and the Swiss authorities is still far from bridged for a number of complicated reasons going back to World War II.

The Federal Council in Bern has welcomed the undertaking and will create a "central administration" to draft guidelines for the fund and establish its goals. The undertaking was also welcomed by Jewish circles in Switzerland who have described it as a step in the right direction.

This conceals the harsh criticism recently levelled at Switzerland, particularly by Jewish groups in the United States. A campaign, led by American Congressman Alphonse D'Amato, leaders of the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency, threatened to boycott Swiss banks, insurance companies and industrial interests both within the US and abroad. It reached its peak when they threatened to halt cooperation with all Swiss organisations in New York City if they did not compensate the Holocaust victims. The compensation is for the harm these people suffered as a result Switzerland's policies during the second world war and its cooperation with the Nazi regime.

The question of compensation has two interlocking facets. The first concerns funds deposited in Swiss banks during the war by individuals who subsequently died in Nazi concentration camps. For a number of decades the heirs of these victims have been demanding that the funds be returned. Their demands have been in vain, however, usually because the relevant documents were lost during the intervening years. The matter was raised in Switzerland as far back as 1962, and committees were formed to settle the question. At the time, Swiss banks paid around 10 million Swiss Francs to families of Nazi victims.

Finance circles estimate the total amount presently deposited in Swiss banks, whose account holders are not known, to be around 38 million Swiss Francs. Jewish groups, however, estimate the total to be much higher and, with the compound interest accumulated over a period of "more than 50 years", they arrive at the figure of half a billion Swiss Francs.

The second of the two facets concerns Swiss financial policy. The Swiss Central Bank and the German Central Bank coordinate their gold-trading efforts on the international market. There are accusations that they transported gold across European borders in the interest of the German Central Bank during the war years — gold stolen from Jews who subsequently died in Nazi concentration camps. Jewish groupings are also hinting at the existence of a gold reserve, stored in Swiss banks since the end of the war, whose value, with compounded interest, reaches into the billions.

Apart from these issues, there is the problem of Swiss policy toward Jews fleeing Germany during the war, and the restrictions Swiss authorities placed on the number of these refugees that could enter the country.

These are the main accusations Jewish groups have been levelling against Switzerland for the last few months. Yet it is clear that no distinction has been made between reclaiming deposits previously lodged in the banks and obtaining compensation for Swiss policies during the period when Nazi Germany was waging war against its neighbours. Swiss gold-trading markets remained open to all parties throughout the war years and, therefore, it is deemed to be unfair to claim that the gold carried by Swiss lorries to sell on behalf of the German Central Bank was Jewish-owned and that Swiss freight companies bear the responsibility for paying compensation.

In the face of this campaign, the Central Federal Government in Bern has formed a number of committees that will deal with the problem. Swiss political parties have reiterated the necessity of dealing with this matter fairly and impartially, and it has been promised that these committees will bring to light the entire truth. Indeed, two years ago, the Swiss president proffered an official apology for Swiss policy during World War II and its destructive effect on Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi terror.

Last December, the Federal Government in Bern formed a committee of seven famous historians, both Swiss and foreign, whose task is to study and examine the question of Swiss financial policies during the Nazi period. It is headed by Jean Francois Bergier, who travelled to Washington and New York last week for discussions with Jewish groups and to inform them of the investigation his committee will pursue.

Some Jewish circles, however, have been calling for quick financial compensation — before the committee forwards its report to the central government. These circles have also demanded that claims made by aged Jewish victims be settled immediately, without waiting for the results of the committee's investigations. This would demonstrate Switzerland's goodwill, since some of these victims are now in their 80s or 90s.

They also mentioned, at the end of last year, the necessity of creating a compensation fund of 450 million Swiss francs. Swiss groups rejected this idea on the spot, saying that legally, the compensation should be linked to the results of the investigation. In light of the intensification of the virulent campaign against Swiss interests, however, the banks have asked all financial and industrial organisations and share companies to contribute to this humanitarian fund for Jewish victims of the Nazis.

Swiss politicians have travelled to the US to describe the great efforts being made by the Swiss government to find a just solution to this problem. Despite the fact that the announcement of the creation of this fund has calmed things down, there is still a risk that matters may be upset by fanatical Jewish groups.

During the Davos economic meeting important discussions took place between the Swiss president and the Israeli prime minister and it is evident that Israeli government statements are extremely cautious and leave the task of pursuing the campaign against Switzerland to deputies in the Knesset and members of the Jewish Agency.

The sense behind Loco's madness

Ecuador's flamboyant leader falls from grace, but amidst popular protests and demonstrations, makes a last ditch-effort to save his presidency. Faiza Rady reports

Abdala Bucaram, the 44-year-old recently-elected president of Ecuador, likes to call himself *El Loco* — "the crazy one". As *El Loco*, some of Bucaram's most spectacular antics have included distributing his salary to the capital's beggars every month; showing off the legs of vice-presidential candidate Rosalia Arteaga during a campaign stop in the oil town of Esmeralda with an admiring: "Look at these big, beautiful legs"; and publicly making good on a promise to shave his mustache after meeting a charity telethon goal of $125,000.

Additionally, Bucaram took to the stage to promote his CD, "A Crazy Man in Love," bopping around with scantily-clad showgirls while singing a Spanish version of the Elvis Presley hit "Jailhouse Rock." Most recently, Bucaram invited the Ecuadorian-born Lorena Bobbit as a special guest of honour to the Presidential palace — Bobbit achieved international notoriety in 1993 for having sexually mutilated her American husband.

Last Thursday, Congress agreed that Bucaram was indeed *loco*, and ousted him from office with a 44-33 vote for "mental and physical incapacity," accusing him of nepotism, corruption and tarnishing the country's image. The Congress acted in the wake of raging student protests, which culminated in a nationwide, two-day strike and mass demonstrations protesting soaring price increases and levelling wide-range corruption charges against Bucaram and his administration, popularly nicknamed "Ali-Abdala and the 40 thieves".

In an attempt to retain his power, Bucaram challenged Congress and resisted the popular tide calling for his resignation. He abandoned all hope, however, as the army withdrew its support, and finally acknowledged his defeat on Sunday when Vice-President Rosalia Arteaga was sworn into office. Arteaga, however, only managed to hold on to power for two days. On Tuesday, Congress voted to replace Arteaga with its own president, Fabian Alarcon, who must set a date for new elections within 12 months. He will govern until August 1998.

On Wednesday and Thursday of last week, an estimated 2.25 million people, from a population of 11.5 million, took to the streets to defy the president's neo-liberal course. Bucaram imposed a tough austerity programme on an impoverished population last December — with 300 per cent hikes on the price of gas, telephone and electricity. Bucaram's endorsement of neo-liberal strategies particularly angered poor Ecuadorians who had voted him into office on the strength of an alleged populist platform.



While on the campaign trail last summer, Bucaram lambasted the rich — vowing to support the unions and the workers against a ruling class composed of "pampered brats" and "spoiled rich kids". He also pledged to avoid the "shock treatment" of price increases and vowed to fight the "massification of poverty" which he blamed on former President Sixto Duran's free market platform. "For many of those who voted for Bucaram, this call for change, however undefined, was one of the candidate's selling points," explained political analyst Justine Newsome.

At the time, Bucaram's top political adviser was Santiago Perez, a former adviser to both Cuban President Fidel Castro and the late Salvador Allende, the Marxist president of Chile in the early 1970s. Yet, as president, Bucaram quickly veered from his initial populist course, outflanking even the conservative opposition, when he hired as an adviser Domingo Cavallo, the former Argentine economy minister who completely revamped his own country's economy in line with the market model. The Ecuadorian workers' militancy last week may be directly related to Bucaram's campaign subterfuge.

Fearing for his life in the capital Quito, the president barricaded himself in his government office — hiding behind rows of barbed wire and massive police cordons — while the surrounding streets overflowed with people holding anti-government banners, banging on pots and pans and chanting: "Bucaram, go away!" In the country's major cities, hundreds of thousands marched through the streets dressed in mourning and carrying coffins bearing Bucaram's name.

In the wake of the street furore, a ferocious power struggle for the presidency erupted between Bucaram, the President of Congress Fabian Alarcon and Vice-President Rosalia Arteaga. In the end, Bucaram and Arteaga both backed down — leaving Alarcon in command of the top job. In a desperate bid to hang on to power, Bucaram had earlier tried to defuse the people's anger by ridding himself of his closest advisers; among them his own brother, Social Welfare Minister Adolfo Bucaram, Energy Minister Alfredo Adoum and Chief of Staff Miguel Salem. When this move did nothing to quell the people's rage, an embattled Bucaram decided to reverse the utility price hikes, "thereby cutting his own economic throat because this move made him lose an estimated $970 million in potential, much-needed revenues," wrote political analyst Tim Johnson. This last-ditch effort was met with indifference from the people of Ecuador, who were resolved to dump their president.

During the brief power struggle, Bucaram challenged Alarcon to resolve their differences "like men". Speaking from his home town, the port of Guayaquil, where he fled on Friday, Bucaram defied Alarcon to show up for a fight. "Today, I speak to Alarcon, the usurper, and I give him an ultimatum as a man, that I'll be waiting for him at six in the afternoon at the Guayas prefecture," Bucaram shouted to the cheers of a supporting crowd. Alarcon scoffed at the challenge. "I don't accept that kind of dare. We're not talking about who is more manly... We're talking about complying with the Constitution," he said derisively.

On Tuesday Alarcon, was sworn in as president with the backing of the country's powerful brass elite. Although the head of the military, General Paco Moncayo, claimed the army was apolitical and remained neutral during the conflict, many political analysts believe that the powerful military-industrial complex worked behind the scenes.

The military, which receives direct cuts from state-owned industries, may have felt threatened by Bucaram's looming privatisation plans — opting to back a candidate more in tune with the army's direct interests. In this context, it is important to note that no previous president ever dared suggest privatising any of the large complex of companies owned by the military, whose open budget is supplemented by direct allocations of oil revenues and profits from those companies.

Former President Sixto Duran resisted touching the army's companies, even when Ecuador could not meet its debt obligation to the International Monetary Fund and had to reschedule arrears of its debt accumulation, which had reached over 80 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product at the end of 1994. In the end, Bucaram had to pay dearly for his ambitious privatisation plans which cost him the army's support.

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**

A difference to agree on

Both advocates and opponents of Copenhagen, writes **Ahmed Fakhr**, will see that increasing popular participation in the peace process is a goal to strive for — together. Personalising the issues can only bog down efforts to achieve justice

I consider the individuals who responded to the Copenhagen Declaration — both opponents and supporters — Egyptian nationalists. This seeming paradox is clarified when we understand that all share one common goal: namely, to serve the cause of Egyptian national interests. They may adopt different strategies, but ultimately, they want to secure Arab rights and achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Arab-Israeli dialogues — wherever they may occur — do not imply normalisation, but an exchange of conflicting and diverging views and opinions leading to a common denominator. This may, ultimately, prove fertile ground and support the peace process. Whether such meetings take place via satellite, during conferences or at solidarity meetings, they do not, in my opinion, constitute normalisation in and of themselves.

Since the meetings which led to the declaration began, some journalists have taken up the subject and expressed opinions which have no bearing on reality. For example, it was said that the idea of starting a dialogue originated at a 1991 London conference, attended by the prominent Egyptian journalist Mohamed Sid-Ahmed and the Egyptian ambassador in London, Nabil Fahmi. According to this report, the official Egyptian Foreign Ministry position veered towards normalisation as a result of the meeting.

I happen to know for a fact, however, that Ambassador Fahmi had indeed been invited to the meeting, but did not attend. I also have certain knowledge that the dialogue took place as a result of popular initiatives, dissociated from any official, organised government effort.

It has also been said that I travelled to Copenhagen. This is hardly the case. In fact, I remained in Cairo. Then an article was published in *Al-Shaab* stating that I had been invited to go to Copenhagen. It is true that I travelled to Copenhagen in September 1995 to explore the potential of starting an Arab/Israeli dialogue and revive the people's role in the peace process, since peace can only be achieved through grassroots participation.

The opinions of the Egyptian participants were different from those of the Danes. The Egyptians believed that the exchange of ideas and conflicting opinions from behind closed doors, followed by a brief communiqué, cannot succeed; as they argued, intellectual dialogue requires transparency. The participants expressed the belief that the views of leading Arab intellectuals should be known and widely discussed, whereas the Danes proposed that fruitful exchanges continue within small groups where intellectuals could air their views. I actually do not know what happened, who attended and how the matter was finally settled.

Recently I received another invitation from the Danish ambassador in Cairo to meet a group of Egyptians, Palestinians and Israelis with the aim of following up on the previous dialogue. After this meeting, a small working group representing the three sides was formed. The group put together a draft position paper to be distributed for wider opinion polling. The Arab group took the position that the paper should reflect the official Arab political line in the negotiations, with possible additions representing the unofficial position. The additions, therefore, included the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an independent state. This was the first time Israelis representing both Labour and Likud used such definitions, acknowledging the Palestinians' right to a state.

The paper also spoke of the necessity of referring to the Madrid protocols as well as UN resolutions 242, 338 and 425 — stressing that these resolutions confer legitimacy upon the principle of "land for peace" in the Israeli negotiations with Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. In addition, the paper included a new clause requiring the Israelis to stop building new settlements — something which both Labour and Likud had consistently ignored until then. The paper also prohibited any further confiscation of Palestinian land, whether public or private. This again set a precedent for both Israeli parties, whose members had never signed a document to that effect. The status of the existing settlements was left out of the discussion since settlements are still to be negotiated within the context of the Oslo Accords.

I abstained from travelling to Copenhagen this time around because the security clause in the draft stated that a comprehensive peace should allow for the establishment of a region free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. This formula may be taken to imply that this goal could be achieved after a comprehensive peace settlement was signed. This contradicts the official policy line — which I also represent in a certain capacity — requiring the *immediate* establishment of a weapon-free region. This is also the policy line of the National Centre of Middle Eastern Studies, of which I am the director, and which specialises in national security and arms control issues. When making policy decisions, I always have to consider the official political line as well as the centre's position. How could I otherwise pretend to advocate that same line?

At the end of the day, the only important goal is to initiate a dialogue between advocates and opponents of dialogue with Israel, and to avoid personalising the issues. When a debate degenerates into personal attacks, an otherwise important issue is necessarily trivialised. The real question we should pose is how we can increase positive popular participation in the peace process, thereby ensuring that people will reject any impediment to peace or any breach of the agreements, and will insist on a comprehensive and just peace — with equal security for both sides. I believe that this is a goal which both supporters and opponents of Copenhagen will agree upon.

The writer is the director of the National Centre of Middle East Studies.

Beyond Copenhagen

Although he believes the Copenhagen meeting backfired, **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** argues that this does not mean Arab intellectuals do not have a pivotal role to play

Much has been written about the meeting held in Copenhagen between Israelis, Egyptians, Palestinians and Jordanians and about the declaration they issued, which did not completely satisfy any of the participants. Though the declaration was issued by consensus, that is, without being put to a vote, it is meant to serve as a launching-pad for a so-called 'Arab-Israeli Alliance for Peace'.

I believe that the heated debate aroused by the meeting not only in Egypt but throughout the Arab world reflects the extent of Arab frustration with the ongoing peace process. Yet I also believe that the Copenhagen event should not be written off as purely negative, but that it can be seen as having set into motion positive developments as well.

I have always called for the activation of an inter-Egyptian debate, in the context of a wider inter-Arab debate, over the essentials of the conflict, particularly over how the Arabs should deal with the Israelis. Thanks to the Copenhagen meeting, an unprecedented all-out debate has erupted among the Arab intelligentsia which, by bringing to light previous contacts and arrangements between the contending parties that were hitherto shrouded in secrecy, offers Arab public opinion the opportunity to call those involved in such activities to account.

Many accusations have been levelled at the Arab participants in the Copenhagen meeting, but I believe the criterion in assessing the event should not be based on personal considerations or on whether given individuals agreed to participate while others did not. There are objective factors in the rationale of the conflict at this stage that cannot be ignored, least of all now that the debate over even the most explosive issues has gone public. In the past, secrecy was used by various forces in the political arena to avoid accountability; from now on, this is no longer possible.

These objective factors all stem from the fact that the Arab states are taking part in an exercise that is, rightly or wrongly, called a peace process, and that they have actually committed themselves to binding contractual arrangements with Israel in the name of peace. Arab intellectuals have in the main remained aloof from the whole process, and most have denounced the course it has followed. But the fact remains that the process is an objective reality that cannot be dismissed. Indeed, as long as all the parties recognise that war is not an option in the foreseeable future, the real question for the Arabs is how to preserve their rights in the context of a balance of power that can remain unfavourable to them for an indefinite period of time. So far, the denunciation and stigmatisation of the process by Arab intellectuals has done little to improve the Arab bargaining position. Even rejectionists like Hizbullah find it necessary to engage the enemy in skirmishes, if only to keep the cause on the global agenda.

That is not to say, however, that the Copenhagen meeting was justified. Indeed, I was the first to decline the invitation to attend, and to give my reasons for not taking part. But now that the national debate over how to deal with Israelis is underway, I believe it is necessary to warn against allowing the situation to swing from one extreme to another, from a euphoria of normalisation to a frenzy of rejectionism. At this critical juncture, there is a greater need for circumspection and a deep sense of responsibility than ever before.

Actually, the Copenhagen meeting was based on an ambiguity, namely, on the assumption that it was a meeting of intellectuals when it was in fact closer to a meeting between negotiators. It is vital here to make a clear distinction between the two categories. The role of the intellectual is qualitatively different from that of a negotiator holding a mandate from his government. Where the intellectual should be primarily concerned with trying to get to the roots of a problem and identifying the underlying factors standing in the way of its resolution, the negotiator tries to improve the balance of power to the advantage of the party he represents by all possible means. While a negotiator discusses issues of contention in the aim of reaching an agreement in their regard, which frequently entails concessions on his part, an intellectual considers a meeting successful if it does nothing more than highlight his differences with his interlocutors. A negotiator is concerned with achieving an agreement at minimum cost, and will not be held responsible even if the agreement he reaches is perceived by the public as having entailed unacceptable concessions. Conversely, the intellectual is personally responsible for his stands, and his credibility depends on the consistency of his logic and the soundness of his arguments, not on his representative capacity.

One lesson to be drawn from the furore over the Copenhagen meeting is that any such endeavour in future must be undertaken in total openness and transparency. Negotiators can resort to secrecy; intellectuals must not. This is all the more true in the case of the Arab-Israeli conflict, where contacts with Israelis will be suspect in the eyes of the Arab public unless they are amenable to supervision and open to scrutiny.

Another lesson is that any attempt to replace the reality of the conflict by a 'virtual' reality tailored to fit the bias of the international media towards one party at the expense of the others is certain to backfire. The expression "Arab-Israeli Alliance", as used in the initial title of the Copenhagen Declaration, is a catchword that would obvious appeal to the international media. However, it would be seen very differently by Arab constituencies, whose grassroots reactions find no similar access to global audiences. Because these reactions were so manifestly negative, the title 'Arab-Israeli Alliance for Peace' was toned down to an 'International Alliance for Peace in the Middle East'. But this name change did little to conceal the real nature of the meeting.

In the final analysis, the Copenhagen meeting failed to convince Arab intellectuals of the need to deal directly with their Israeli counterparts. If anything, it strengthened the position of those who advocate a line of total boycott. Despite my opposition to the Copenhagen enterprise, I do not object in principle to meetings between Arab and Israeli intellectuals, provided they meet to perform what intellectuals are called upon to do. In my opinion, such meetings are unavoidable because, once we accept the proposition that peace cannot be condemned in principle, it becomes imperative to distinguish what is legitimate and what is not in the demands put forward by the adversary. State agencies alone are not equipped to undertake this particularly delicate task, which entails dealing with the opponent as a subject, not an object, of history. Only open and direct encounters between independent intellectuals on either side of the divide can defeat the temptation to demonise the opponent, and eliminate any misperceptions regarding the objectives of the other.

Copenhagen clamour

By Naguib Mahfouz



Why all the fuss about the meeting in Copenhagen, which was attended by Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian intellectuals? Why have the participants been accused of treason and of working for foreign powers?

Personally, I am for a rapprochement between the advocates of peace in Arab and Israeli camps, a rapprochement which would generate consensus on the fundamentals of peace and therefore soften the positions of hardliners. I personally commend the action of those who went to Copenhagen; I see it as an expression of nationalism.

To those who denounce the Copenhagen Declaration on the grounds that it does not provide for total withdrawal from the Golan Heights nor assert that Jerusalem is an Arab city, I would say that those who went to Copenhagen were not mandated to negotiate, nor would the officials in Copenhagen have accepted any form of document different from the present one.

The meeting in Copenhagen succeeded in keeping the channels open between the advocates of peace on both sides which could bring pressure on those who object to peace. The document, however can always be amended or modified in the future.

As for those who argued that the delegation does not represent the Arab intelligentsia, I would like to ask a question. Why should Arab intellectuals, diverse as they are, be fully represented at the meeting? In a totally different context, I still remember the declarations made in Yemen, that "No peace will reign till the end of time!" Why should one viewpoint be represented, and not the other?

Those who went to Copenhagen represent the advocates of peace among Arab intellectuals, while the opponents of peace were not represented at that particular meeting. I would suggest that we leave each party to serve national interests as it sees fit. Peace will benefit from efforts in all directions. The matter must therefore remain at this point, as a controversy. But a controversy is one thing; calling people traitors is quite another.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Arab-Arab dialogue

Al-Ahram: "The objective of this suicidal leap into the unknown is to transfer the disagreements over peace which divide Israeli society to Arab ranks. This will lead to bitter disputes between supporters of alliance and normalisation and opponents of the normalisation process. The situation now is grave and will not withstand belligerent words, flaring tempers or personality battles. Objectively, we need to form an alliance to oppose normalisation. A broad popular Arab alliance must hold a conference to confront Copenhagen and draw up the main principles of a just and comprehensive peace while taking into consideration Arab national interests. This alliance will be truly representative of the Arab nation. Will we form a popular alliance, or merely continue to lose our tempers?"

(Salaheddin Hafez, 5 February)

Al-Ahali: "Foreign Minister Amr Moussa has described opponents of the Copenhagen Alliance as short-sighted and not serious. Palestinian poet Samih El-Qassem has said that opponents of normalisation are engaging in one-upmanship and that the issue of normalisation is nonsense. Yet we encourage dialogue with the Israelis while we tear each other's clothes and are incapable of a dialogue among ourselves."

(Amina El-Naqqash, 5 February)

Al-Ahram: "The Copenhagen alliance was violently opposed from the outset. The participants were even accused of being traitors and foreign agents. The anti-Copenhagen front now includes the opponents of the Oslo Accord so that the matter appeared to be a struggle between Arafat and Assad, waged on Egyptian soil — perhaps because Lutfi El-Kholi (who is close to Arafat) was the head of the Egyptian delegation. Those who do not want to marginalise Egypt's role in the peace process must critique and develop the Copenhagen process while conceding others the right to oppose the Copenhagen peace."

(Reda Hilal, 5 February)

Al-Gomhouriya: "Rabin moved towards peace after discovering the exorbitant price being paid by his troops in confronting Palestinian resistance operations against the occupation. Netanyahu has also begun to change under increasing economic pressures. He changed course in order to save and revive the Israeli economy. It is now opportune to talk about Davos and Egypt and what is required of the government and businessmen. If Netanyahu has given priority to economic considerations over ideology, then we too must change our way of thinking and determine our objectives and our plans."

(Mahfouz El-Ansari, 7 February)

Al-Mussawar: "Our role as intellectuals is to encourage governments and the Palestinian National Authority in the direction of Madrid [land for peace] and Oslo [the implement of this agreement]. No government or authority has the right to deviate from any principle, resolution or accord. I told a meeting of politicians and intellectuals before the Danish parliament that this was the end of the tunnel for the peace process, and that it was inevitable that a Palestinian state would rise alongside Israel."

(Lutfi El-Kholi, 7 February)

Rose El-Youssef: "The Israeli government has created a barrier between itself and the Arab peoples, particularly Egyptians — a psychological barrier which rises higher every day as Israeli intransigence, arbitrariness and arrogance increase. The Egyptian people are required to transcend all this. This is not possible under any circumstances. Intellectuals are required to play a role in bringing about change, but their position is very difficult indeed because the basic minimum has not been achieved. How can they persuade Egyptians to welcome their Israeli 'brothers' when these same Israelis kill Arabs, despise them, threaten them with more settlements, and prevent them from praying at Al-Aqsa? The Israeli 'brothers' have failed to convince the Egyptian people that they want peace: any attempt to bring the two together together will fail.

(Mahmoud El-Tohami, 10 February)

October: "Some intellectuals believe that a debate is a personal quarrel which only leads to greater animosity. When will intellectuals learn the meaning of culture and debate?"

(Ragab El-Bana, 9 February)

Compiled by ***Galal Nassar***



Awad El-Morr, Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, hit the headlines when the Court ruled on the constitutionality of privatisation procedures. And as always the Court's unequivocal ruling was delivered by the man whose face is framed by grey hair, recalling the wigs of pharaonic sages, and punctuated by bushy eyebrows above deep-set, perceptive eyes.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Satanic vices

For some weeks, Egypt has found itself mired in a cultural quandary — what to do about a group of youth who allegedly worship Satan. And seemingly, perhaps out of a reluctance, or inability, to understand the circumstances which led up to this sensationalised case, the accused are branded heretics while the whole issue is probably blown absurdly out of proportion.

It is at times like these that the hostile levity of youth, or the impertinent allure of values and mores outside the realm of a traditional understanding of a nation's values and temperament, are misinterpreted. It is at times like these that a rock concert may cease to be just a rock concert, and black nail polish worn by prima donnas becomes the mark of the devil.

But where values and traditions part ways, as they must, in a country that is far from homogenous, common sense and passionless perspective should prevail. This is not likely to be a case of a Satanic cult operating freely within Cairo any more than it is a case where the nation's tapestry of tradition and religiosity stands threatened to be ripped apart by internal turmoil. It is a case of a group of wayward youths who mistakenly believed that their fellow countrymen would view their actions, at worst, with a measure of curiosity. It is a case that begs for reconciliation, not punitive or criminal measures, where the short-winded elation of a handful of teenagers is pitted against the abortive sorrows of those who would exacerbate a non-issue.

Ultimately, it is a case where the accused are as guilty as the society that has condemned them, of not understanding their surroundings. However, in the midst of substantial hype, all that has been made apparent is that Satanism is an ideological commodity exported form the West, promoted through the Internet and is primed to undermine Egypt's Muslim heritage.

Sadly, comments such as these, which have been proffered as freely as any other brand of riotous rhetoric, serve only to detract from the fundamental decencies of a pluralistic, democratic society that seeks to both stand firm by its traditions while simultaneously expanding its economic and political future.

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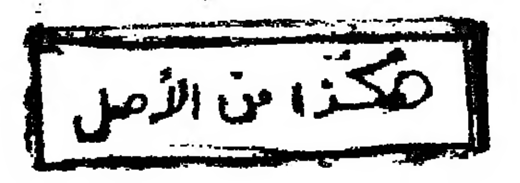
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Close up

Salama A. Salama

No excuses

It has become standard practice for Egypt to declare its faith in peace with Israel every now and again, and reassert its firm intention to work towards this goal to the end. It also pledges to try every means in its power to achieve agreements between the Palestinians and Israel, and promises that it will never abandon its role in the peace process, come what may.

These affirmations are repeated by the lowest official and the top brass alike every time an American or Israeli paper insinuates that Egypt has opposed, turned down or expressed dissenting views on an Israeli or American proposal. The same assertions are repeated whenever insinuations are made about the Egyptian reaction to any steps the negotiations are going through, or the obstacles facing the Israelis and the Arab parties.

This was the case recently when the Egyptian ambassador in Washington had to reply to the lead article in the *New York Times* which claimed that Egypt had not showed much enthusiasm over Netanyahu's moves towards peace, the Hebron agreement with the Palestinians, and the working relationship cobbled together with Yasser Arafat.

The paper claimed that Egypt had been working behind the scenes to discourage Arafat from signing the Hebron agreement and accepting Israeli demands, and had only changed its position at the last moment, agreeing to a mid-way solution. Egypt's negative attitude — according to the *Times* — in addition to the "hate campaigns" launched by the Egyptian media, exacerbated the tension in relations between Egypt and Israel.

The paper continued in this style, comparing the Egyptian stand on the peace process with the positive, pragmatic position of Jordan, and suggested that Egypt's stand not only affects its relations with Israel but also with the US. The *New York Times* attributed the Egyptian stance to this country's desire to maintain its position as leader of the Arab world — no mention was made of the obstacles Israel has raised to obstruct the agreements concluded with the Palestinians under the Rabin-Peres government, and its determination to renege on its promises.

This facetious argument is based on a singular premise: that achieving a just peace in the Middle East, ensuring that Israel acts in a way consistent with international principles of justice and the decisions reached in Madrid, would weaken Egypt's pioneer status in the Arab world. This is truly the height of stupidity, since Egypt suggested the peace strategy as basis for coexistence, development and the welfare of the region as a whole. If peace is really to be achieved on the basis of equality and respect for the indigenous population's right to self-determination, if peace is to be founded on cooperation, security and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, then there will be no need for any party to claim leadership.

It is quite obvious that Israel is still searching for a way to block the formation of a Palestinian state, to ensure that the Palestinians' rights to Jerusalem will never be granted, and to eliminate the possibility of any just resolution of the settlements issue.

It irks Israel that Egypt should in any way support Arafat in his attempts to deal with Israeli prevarication and dissimulation. Egyptian backing of Syria in its stand on Israeli withdrawal also annoys Israel intensely. It would be of great help to Israel were Egypt to back the flexible and obscure solutions devised by the US, although this would mean the defeat of the Arab parties in the name of peace and stability in the Middle East.

These and similar falsehoods often published by American and Israeli newspapers generally appear just before meetings between the US administration and leaders of Middle East nations. It is unnecessary for us to add that the peace process is now at a critical stage, as the Netanyahu government's plans are still unclear despite the Hebron agreement — which, of course, has not yet been implemented. The next stage requires Israeli assurances, not reassurances from Egypt.



Soapbox

Net winners

A professor of public administration has succeeded in converting a small Swiss village, Davos, into a global annual venue drawing economists, industrialists and politicians.

Dr Klaus Schwab, the chairman of the World Economic Forum, is also the founder of Davos as an international site, where the forum's annual meetings are held.

Every year, the forum selects a general theme for discussion. The theme this year was the construction of the Network Society — a reaction to the global computing revolution.

The digital revolution is set to alter work patterns, production and human relations in general, in a manner reminiscent of the effects produced by the industrial revolution.

The new revolution knows no boundaries. Only those who can keep up will win. Those who hesitate in adopting new technology are condemned to lose.

Davos has also become a marketplace for investment promotion at the global level. Certain countries, including Egypt, have come to regard the annual forum as an opportunity to attract foreign investments.

This year, the meetings held between President Mubarak, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat were among the most notable achievements. The meetings were instrumental in easing some hardline positions.

President Mubarak went to Davos for the first time to tell the world that Egypt is eager to take part in events at the global level. Egypt is not only up to date on new technological developments, but is relentlessly striving to become an active participant in the technological revolution.



This week's soapbox speaker is a prominent columnist, formerly chairman of Akhbar Al-Yom Organisation and editor-in-chief of Al-Akhbar.

Said Sonbol

Another link in the chain

Who do the delegates to Copenhagen represent? **Abdel-Azim Anis** examines the issues behind the declaration

To understand what happened in Copenhagen on 30 January 1997, and to fathom the implications of the event (leaving aside possible illusions derived from the text of the document or propagated by certain of its participants), due regard must be given to a number of basic considerations.

The first is that any compromises which take place on the ground in dealing with the enemy are dictated primarily, not by declarations issued here or there, but by the military and economic balance of forces, regionally and internationally. We should remember that, notwithstanding all the United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict issued over the past fifty years (which provided for the creation of two separate states in Palestine, asserted Arab sovereignty over the eastern sector of Jerusalem, called for Israel's evacuation from south Lebanon, etc.), Israel has banked on US support and its own military supremacy, flouting each and every resolution and showing complete disdain for international legitimacy. If all these UN resolutions have failed to produce any response from Israel, how can we expect any reactions on the ground to the Copenhagen Declaration, signed by Israelis with no official mandate?

The second consideration has to do with the relevance of the Arab delegation to Copenhagen. Members of the delegation represent neither the people nor even a significant section of the intelligentsia in their respective Arab countries. One look at the Jordanian delegation makes this eminently clear. The leader of the delegation is the head of the Royal Chancellery. The opposition of the Jordanian people to the "normalisation" of relations with Israel is well known. Thousands of Jordanians courageously reacted to the opening of the Israeli Industrial Fair in Amman, staging a sit-down strike in front of the premises on the day of its inauguration.

As for the Egyptian delegation, its composition has been kept secret from the Egyptian intelligentsia. Mohamed Sid-Ahmed disclosed the whole issue only two days before the meeting was due to take place in Copenhagen, when he turned down the invitation and declared his reasons. Only then was it revealed that five other colleagues had done the same thing. The Tagammu Party distanced itself from Lutfi El-Kholi and condemned the resolutions and statement issued by the Copenhagen meeting. The Palestinian delegation was no doubt designated by the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, and specifically by Arafat. The Egyptian media's claims that the Palestinian delegation included members of the Palestinian opposition such as Riad Al-Malki and Sheikh Hamami, are false, simply because the two individuals in question are no longer in the opposition, but have joined Arafat's camp.

Therefore, it may be said that the Jordanian delegation is a government creation and the same is true of the Palestinians. The Egyptian delegation obtained the government's blessings, as reflected in the statement of Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, who publicly defended the document.

The third consideration which deserves attention is the fact that the Palestinian Authority has been faced with a severe dilemma since the conclusion of the Hebron agreement. Arafat himself, as Mubarak explained in Davos, does not conceal his pessimism regarding Israel's commitment to pledges concerning Palestinian prisoners, airports, the road between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the areas to be evacuated in the West Bank. The promises made verbally have remained just that, not having been substantiated in a written document; nor were they secured by US guarantees. It is understood, as the US secretary of state confirmed, that implementation remains largely in Netanyahu's hands. No matter how much the Palestinian negotiators may object, their opposition has no concrete form. Arafat, who believed that, once the Hebron agreement was signed, all the other issues would be settled, discovered that nothing more will happen, at least until final status negotiations are launched.

In other words, while Netanyahu may have succeeded in carrying out his plan to modify the Oslo and Cairo agreements on the ground (with Washington's blessings), Arafat has failed to stand firm on the terms of the agreements already in place and to object to the modification of their terms. Worse still, Washington is endeavouring to persuade the Palestinians to break away from other Arab parties, in the hope of wresting further compromises from the Arabs in the wake of the Hebron agreement. It is clear that Arafat lacks an effective strategy in dealing with Israel, not in terms of goals, but in terms of mechanisms for their realisation. Even the economic boycott, a weapon long used by the Arabs to bring pressure on Israel, is disintegrating.

The fourth consideration is Israel's awareness that, despite the lapse of over 17 years since the signing of the peace agreement with Egypt, the vast majority of Egyptians still reject the normalising of relations with Israel and continue to consider it Egypt's enemy number one. A small number of Egyptians does favour normalisation, but it is worth noting that the Cairo-Tel Aviv public transportation line has been cancelled for lack of passengers at the Cairo end. The Israeli state is fully conscious that popular attitudes will not change unless it succeeds in winning over a large sector of the Egyptian intelligentsia. On these grounds, we may understand Israel's relentless efforts to open any kind of dialogue with any elements of the Egyptian intelligentsia, regardless of the record or status of such elements in the eyes of the Egyptian public. A dialogue of this kind, which is not sought as an aim in itself, is perceived as opening some channel of communication in the future.

Egyptians have their own reservations on any dialogue, however. They have not forgotten that Israel murdered several hundred Egyptian prisoners of war in 1967, an issue which has yet to be settled; nor can they disregard last year's slaughter of innocent people in Qana, in Lebanon. The Egyptians can see for themselves the violence perpetrated by the Israeli government and by Jewish settlers against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza; they remember that Al-Aqsa Mosque is in Jerusalem, that the Ibrahimi shrine is in Hebron, and that both sacred sites are totally under Israel's control.

All these considerations affected the Copenhagen meeting. By sending a large delegation to Copenhagen, Arafat sought to test the water. He hoped that the meeting would reveal elements sympathetic to the Palestinians, who would help him out of the crises currently closing in on him from every side. He also hoped that meetings like the one held in Copenhagen will encourage Europe to play a more substantial role in the negotiations and in monitoring the implementation of agreements on the ground. The Egyptian government, on the other hand, hoped to chip away at the wall of Israeli intransigence, particularly since the document co-sponsored by Likud and Labour regarding the future of the negotiations revealed a hard-line position, which dampened Arab expectations. The same is true of the Jordanian government, which has to address its people's firm rejection of normalisation. In fact, Jordan could not put together a "popular" delegation to Copenhagen, and instead was compelled to send a delegation led by the head of the Royal Jordanian Chancellery and the Commander of the Jordanian Air Force.

Israel and Denmark hope that the Copenhagen meeting will undermine the Arabs' increasing rejection of normalisation. Denmark seems to be suggesting that it can offer Israel services in domains where Washington itself has failed.

The Copenhagen Declaration, however, although unsigned, is a record of "sins" unworthy of any Arab intellectual. The term "terrorism", which appears in the preamble to the declaration, has been used, as we all know, to designate armed resistance to occupation, a resistance recognised as legitimate by international organisations and charters. The activities of Hizbullah in southern Lebanon and the activities of the Palestinian opposition in the West Bank and Gaza would fall into the category of "terrorist" activities. The declaration calls for a ban on the building of new Jewish settlements, but fails to mention the future of existing settlements, which hold tens of thousands of extremists in the West Bank and Gaza. The very existence of the settlements, which have transformed the Palestinian territories into a set of isolated cantons, renders any discourse about the "Palestinian state" meaningless. The declaration makes no mention of withdrawal from the Golan, nor from south Lebanon, and contents itself with referring to Resolution 242, which calls for withdrawal from "Arab territories" preferring to leave the status of all the territories in the dark.

If commitment to Arab objectives in the face of Israeli intransigence is not the quintessential duty of the Arab intelligentsia, then what is this intelligentsia's function?

Negotiating with the enemy is the job of government negotiators, not intellectuals, whose basic role is indeed to raise public awareness of fundamental issues, and to sensitise the people to their national interests. It is shocking, therefore, that a group of Arab intellectuals — with a mandate from no one — should claim the right to negotiate and offer concessions in the form of declaration, while the so-called "gains" they claim to have wrested from the other side are worth less than nothing on the ground. The Copenhagen Declaration is one more link in the chain — just one more fiasco.

The writer is the author of many works on current ME political affairs and a professor of mathematics at Ain Shams University.

To The Editor

Open debate

Sir- It is encouraging that a forum is provided in the Egyptian press for a thinker such as Francis Fukuyama, who is *en vogue* and thus reflects a tendency of thought in the "West". (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 30 Jan-5 Feb 1997).

In reviewing their arguments, we should keep in mind Fukuyama and Elmessiri's different perspectives, as well as the levels of human and social experience under discussion. Fukuyama is, first of all, an economist and, although his theories involve other aspects of thought, we cannot look to an economist for coherent theory based on transcendental idealism.

Although Elmessiri makes the usual charges of general moral bankruptcy against the "West", he does distinguish in his interview between an "operative paradigm" and "dissenting... voices" in Western intellectual tradition, which do not "contribute to [its] formation".

This raises the question of the role of these dissenting voices. According to Elmessiri, Western humanists are perceived as a threat to their society, and Islam is perceived as a threat on the same theoretical level (as a system of values). The role of the intelligentsia in society is generally problematic, involving charges of elitism and otherness.

*I believe it is safe to say that the intelligentsia, such as journal*ists and academics, in any country — including Egypt and the US — represent a much more liberal line of thinking than that prevalent in society as a whole. The "dissenting voices" are, however, not necessarily peripheral where there is, to some extent, a free press. The danger, where dissent and the status quo overlap, is self-censorship.

Islam cannot be seen as a threat in the same way in Western countries because, as Fukuyama points out, it has made no incursion on values within those countries. In the US, rather, the emergence of the religious right could be compared with the rise of religious fundamentalism in Islamic countries. Both are also internal phenomena.

The connection between technology as a cultural force, and an erosion of traditional values, has long been recognised in Western countries. But the result is usually superficial demonisation and a retreat from any confrontation with the real sources of alienation.

The perception in Islamic (and other) cultures of the Western "paradigm" as invasive is strengthened by a history of Western colonial aggression and ongoing political tension with Israel. On the other hand, any perception in the West of Islam as a threat is merely one example of demonisation, based on very limited knowledge about Islam and a visceral reaction to "Islamist" terrorism.

*Wholesale condemnation of any culture can only be counter*productive. Easy solutions are not forthcoming, so let us hope there will be no end to dialogue.

Nancy Roberts-Moneir
Heliopolis,
Cairo

Walk by the sea

Sir- I would like to call for the pedestrianisation of the corniche in Alexandria.

The project for the revival of the ancient library is underway. Its opening will be met with a huge amount of interest and international attention. The city should be geared towards this event in all respects. It would be an appropriate time to revamp Alex. The shabby old fisherwoman can once more become the 'Bride of the Mediterranean'.

Alex's greatest attractions have all been connected to the sea, yet in summer one can't move due to a chaotic traffic system. Nor can one admire or contemplate the sea peacefully. If the corniche were a pedestrian area, the sea and its sounds, the views and the air, could all be enjoyed by the *city's inhabitants, the Arab tourists and Cairene visitors in* the summer, and by tourists from outside the Middle East all year round.

The area of the corniche is wide enough to provide a *lane for cyclists. Cafeterias and restaurants could extend* their outdoor seating areas — within clearly defined boundaries — and there would still be ample space for walkers, picnickers and vendors. In addition to this, the area *along the corniche is dotted with sights of interest:* archeological sites (Shatby, Mustafa Kamel, Stanley), important mosques (Abul-Abbas, Qa'id Ibrahim, Sidi Bishr etc.), beaches, promontories, as well as new shops, cafés and restaurants.

If the sea is Alex's greatest asset, then why are the two so poorly managed? The sea front should be developed, protected and skillfully integrated with the sea itself. It could transform Alex from a secondary destination into a primary one, with the library as the centrepiece.

In Port Said, albeit on a small scale, the corniche has been pedestrianised prettily and the sea is for all to enjoy. Lessons can be learned from this sister city. We could go one step further and give the whole sea front a facelift.

Admittedly, it's a hugely ambitious proposal. What to do with the traffic would be the first question. Again, the answer could be found locally — a system of flyovers like Cairo's.

If the whole corniche is impractical, then why not a scaled-down venture which could include the area from Shatby to Qaitbey Fort? This would cover the eastern harbour, the new library and the city centre — the most frequented places. They could be linked up very nicely.

It seems a great opportunity is waiting to be seized to do a thorough job, not only glittering bits and pieces. Vision can bring this city of once-upon-a-time splendour a more down-to-earth, yet world renowned, character.

Youssef Hindess
Alexandria

Reflections By Hani Shukrallah

Got their goat

Hypocrisy is highly underestimated as a tool of social and political cohesion and stability. Dominant, or hegemonic, ideologies are never fully coherent structures; they contain and *generally tend to successfully reproduce* a whole heap of contradictory elements, political, social and cultural discourses, articulated in an extremely complex manner, to achieve an overall, dynamic, coherence.

In such a structure, "pure" discourses exist as many loci surrounded by great tracts of grey space, with hybrids of all kinds softening the edges. World views which initially seem contradictory not only coexist, but are articulated — Sheikh Shaarawi, Dulles, *Subermarkits* for the *higab*-wearers, *zars*, pop and *shababi* music, Ihsan Abdel-Qudous and *'Azab Al-Qabr*, neo-liberalism, Islamic fundamentalism and Nasserism — all have done their bit to formulate the collective psyche of mainstream Egypt during the past two decades and more.

This is a result not only of the complexity of the process of ideological production, and the fact that, for an ideology to be hegemonic, it must accommodate a whole range of traditions, social needs and perspectives, but also of the ever-present gulf separating society's idealised picture of itself — ideology — and actual social practice.

Coherence, however, is not always achieved through rationalisation. Sometimes the contradictions are so sharp that only repression can be used. This is where hypocrisy comes in. It takes the shape of a host of "public secrets", an implicit contract, *involving all the members of "mainstream"* society, whereby the existence of the contradictions will simply be denied and whereby, if they force themselves on public attention, they will be quarantined as aberrations, invasive and foreign, having nothing to do with "our nature".

The genius of hypocrisy as cement lies in the fact that it creates a bond of complicity between the privileged and the underprivileged, the oppressors and the oppressed, within an established structure of relations. It *allows the dominant forces to maintain their* dominance, while allowing the dominated to subvert it in many different little ways, making them more able to cope. Above all, however, *and as the literature of very diverse cul*tures has revealed over and over, hypocrisy is especially suited to the social location of the middle classes. They are the ultimate producers of a society's intelligentsia and, hence, its ideological production.

But the degree to which hypocrisy plays a role in maintaining dominant ideology, or in other words, the degree to which that ideology resorts to repression and denial, as opposed to rationalisation, in obfuscating its internal contradictions and maintaining its dominance, seems to correspond inversely to the level of stability it enjoys. A dominant ideology in crisis involves a much higher degree of hypocrisy as a mechanism of imposing overall coherence. As cracks grow deeper and wider, the space for hypocrisy expands, and so do mainstream society's blood-lust, the need for scapegoats and distraction, intensify. Silliness, ignorance and stupidity acquire a new-found respectability. Hitherto sensible and rational intellectuals — whether cynically ("to rouse the masses") or worse, out of genuine conviction — come to advocate the most ridiculous conspiracy theories: reds under beds, aerosol-can-wielding Copts spraying signs of the cross over veiled women's dresses, Israeli agents flooding the Egyptian market with aphrodisiac chewing gum, seeking to transform our young women into raving nymphomaniacs...

All this comes to mind as we are bombarded once again with a wave of public hysteria whose most prominent feature is blatant hypocrisy. I speak of course of the recent Satanist-hunt, which has involved the printed and audio-visual media, prominent writers and intellectuals, members of the religious establishment, government and opposition representatives and, to more conclusive effect, the security bodies and investigation authorities.

Al-Ahram Weekly



photo: Emil Karam

Umm Kalthoum with Mohamed El-Mougi

In taxis and Tunisia

Atef El-Ghamri, attending a screening of the documentary *Umm Kulthoum* in Washington, spoke to its director, Michele Goldmann, and gauged the reaction of the expatriate audience

The audience gathered in the cultural section of the Egyptian Embassy in Washington to watch the documentary *Umm Kulthoum* had anticipated a very Americanised version of the biography of the great Egyptian singer. This was not the case, however. The film began with a sequence set in the Egyptian countryside, at dawn, with a water-wheel turning and Umm Kulthoum's voice narrating: "I was born at dawn".

From then on, director Michele Goldmann had the audience in thrall. Whether it was Umm Kulthoum singing or talking about herself, or interviewees discussing her career, the expatriates there lapped up the nostalgia evoked by the film, their anticipation reaching a peak with the celebrated song *Al-Atlal* (The Ruins).

"It was important", explains Goldmann, "to build the film around a central theme. It is, after all, an English-language documentary addressing an American audience. To present a personality that had influence in a distant country was not enough. It was important that this personal story provide a wider framework for a whole society."

This, elaborates Goldmann, was not difficult in terms of Umm Kulthoum, for in her biography the personal and the political met. The biography of the singer thus becomes the biography of modern Egypt. "Wherever I went in Egypt", says Goldmann, "people were unanimous about Umm Kulthoum, as if it had been only five minutes since she departed."

Narrated in part by Omar Sherif, the film traces Umm Kulthoum's life from her birth all the way to her death in 1975 when, we are told, four million people followed her funeral cortege. The camera then cuts to a taxi driving through Cairo, 1996, with Umm Kulthoum's *Anta Umri* flowing from it. We then follow a pedestrian with a transistor in hand. "Umm Kulthoum was like the Pyramids," he says.

Among those interviewed about Umm Kulthoum, Amal Fahmi believed that chief among her abilities was her perfect enunciation of Arabic. To both Naguib Mahfouz and Omar Sherif, Umm Kulthoum's rapport with her audience in performance was the essence of her extraordinary career. Saadeddin Wahba, on the other hand, views her as a highly evolved product of village life.

Setting Umm Kulthoum's career in context, Mohamed Ouda goes back to the time before she was a star. When she moved to Cairo, he explains, she found several women occupying the thrones of entertainment: Rose Youssef was the grande dame of acting, Badia Masabni ruled the revue while, Mounira El-Mahdia was "the sultana of singing". Ouda goes on to explain how Umm Kulthoum not only carved a niche for herself, but eventually was herself to become the most illustrious occupant of the entertainment throne.

Umm Kulthoum's collaborators over the years are also spotlighted in the film, their varied imprints on her career thrown into relief: Sheikh Abu El-Ela Mohamed, Mohamed El-Qasabgi, Zakaria Ahmed, Ahmed Rami and Riyad El-Sunbati (the latter credited with having created a more contemporaneous image for her), all take their bows.

Bringing out the parallelism between Umm Kulthoum's career and the biography of modern Egypt, as it were, Goldmann tracks the singer's treatment of landmark events, from the 1919 Revolution all the way through to the 1952 Revolution.

Indeed, we see the short-lived ban on Umm Kulthoum after the revolution. When Nasser asked his assistants why Umm Kulthoum's songs were no longer broadcast on the radio he was told that, given she was a singer who dated back to King Farouk's times, she was not to sing in the new era. Nasser's response was to lift the ban, saying that public opinion would turn against the revolution should Umm Kulthoum's voice continue to be withheld. The president then made a point of attending Umm Kulthoum's monthly concerts.

For Saadeddin Wahba, as for many other Egyptians, Umm Kulthoum, like Nasser, is an essential component of nationalism. After the 1967 defeat, the story is often told, Umm Kulthoum left the upstairs floor of her villa and spent a few days in the basement, as was her wont in moments of sorrow. But then she soon started going on concert tours to raise funds for arms. And when Nasser died, she again retired to the basement of her villa.

Demonstrating Umm Kulthoum's ambassadorial role, Omar Sherif cites her trip to Tunisia in the wake of the 1967 defeat. Relations between Egypt and Tunisia were at their nadir. But after Umm Kulthoum's concert there and her meeting with the Tunisian president, relations were restored.

After the screening, Goldmann explained to the audience aspects of the production, including the research involved. "We collected about 300 photos of Umm Kulthoum in Cairo. Then I traveled to London, Paris, New York and Washington where I met all sorts of researchers who had worked on various aspects of Egyptian culture," she said, "but what I obtained in Egypt was the most important material for the film." Having screened *Umm Kulthoum* at the 42nd New York film festival, Goldmann explained, she felt she needed to gauge Egyptian responses to the film she had spent four years working on — hence the screening at the Egyptian cultural section in Washington. Goldmann then disclosed that she was currently at work on an Arabic version of *Umm Kulthoum*.

Music

A whirling life

David Blake spins

Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Ramadaniat 3; soloist, Lutfi Boshnak; conductor, Sayed Awad; Cairo Opera House, Main Hall, 1 February

If you have had enough of the three tenors, why not try Lutfi Boshnak, here again after an immensely popular visit last year during the Arabic Music Festival. A very big audience listened in rapture to his show. There is nothing rusty or travel-stained about Boshnak. He is a performer with something of his own to offer and he exudes a uniquely happy atmosphere to go with the voice.

For Ramadan he is the ideal performer, and fits snugly into Cairo's special atmosphere. He is no pedant about music or its performance. He is here to make friends and to love people, but without the slightest sentimentality or condescension. He is pop, but not cheap or tawdry, even though at times he offers sweet satin drenched in honey. He knows how far to go and not a step further will he venture, though the audience wills him to solicit.

He has been properly trained as a vocalist and his style is, in spite of bizarre twists and additions to the piece that is sung, pure and without any tenor indulgences. He is extremely cunning in how far to bend to an audience without losing either dignity or tempo. Apparently he has a world audience and travels East and West. What the West thinks of him is an open question. The oriental East adores him.

It is obvious why an ample looking, serious male — sweet Mr Everyman with routine fantasy moustache — can be trusted to bring home the weekly pay check. He can even deal with the gender bend. He is Samon and Don Jose, but can also be his own Delila and Carmen.

The Boshnak evening started with the well known vocal arrangement of Chopin's piano etude in E major, said here to be by El Saedi — certainly a favourite diva dish of past years. Chopin's fiercely erotic-political journey into a turbulent flash of Poland's past made a lovely fireside lullaby by Boshnak. This was where the satin appeared and it was deep crimson. The tenor voice gave fine legato to the melody. Boshnak can really phrase.

A piece by Tchaikovsky led into the presto folk dance from Bizet's *Arlesienne* with the farandole. Virtuoso effort, and like most of the numbers was repeated by the singer to unusually fervent applause.

And then the piece of the evening — the Habanera from *Carmen*. What Callas or Emma Calvé, two Carmen greats, must be doing in their graves is better left to the imagination. How the baba figure in neat office suit and classy moustache ever came to fancy himself as the breast heaving Carmen, siren of the Camel cigarette factory, and what she's suggesting can be done under the ramparts yonder of Seville, only Lutfi Boshnak knows.

We the audience had a good-night song to mother — a *Carmen* wash-down. Yet there was nothing snide or simpering about the Boshnak Carmen. No Liberace erotica but something child-like. Odd, because this tenor adores opera and presents these scenes in the hopes of weaning his audience into the real thing. How does mother's lullaby go with the knife thrusts which end *Carmen*. One evening we may find the Boshnak answer.

He gave a hectic, abrasive *O Solo Mio*. Naples might have something to think about.

A Johannes Strauss polka did for finishing. Lutfi Boshnak repeated it, gathered up his music, to which he had no need of reference, and walked off the stage, correct, professional and happy. The audience was ecstatic.

This concert had begun with the *Overture to the Death of Cleopatra*, the conductor's own opera. It has an awesome tread to it — the doom of rulers and nations. It strikes its own note and what a note that is when listened to over two long evenings.

Something very different came after the overture — Sayed Awad's *Fantasy for Lute and Orchestra*, with



Lutfi Boshnak

Mamdouh El-Gebaly the soloist.

He is one of those wonderful players who accompanied Umm Kalthoum in her late days. The playing was in a class and technique of its own, leaving most lute players behind, far off over the horizon. The piece is daring, a lute having to contend with a huge orchestra is difficult to pull off successfully. Whether or not it was dedicated to El-Gabaly, he played as if no one but he could accomplish the fan-like movement of the lute, in sound rivaling a harpsichord, which flashed through various tunes.

The strength and brilliance of the playing constituted a weaving of spells and was unlike what usually passes for lute playing. Nothing dry or spare. The piece had Bach-like grandeur, seemed to be brief and was finished before the listener could adapt to the fact: this was a lute.

Ramadan Concert; Libya. Chorus and Orchestra. Conductor Hassan Ariby.

If you can keep your equanimity for the first two hours without spinning out into space or going off to sleep, you may have entered your own personal quantum region where the hearing of this concert would be an inspiring spell on the loom of time. It goes on forever.

The singers of this chorus accompanied by a small combination and their conductor Hassan Ariby on the lute were a distinguished team of players, adept at unwinding the apparent unending threads of music of which it consists.

A listener sits, the group begins, quite a large chorus of extremely handsome men in oatmeal coloured robes. Their voices have that compelling sound of the best all-male voiced choirs. A unison of tones, not comforting but aloof, salutary and rather awesome. This is no pleasure garden, but a space dome for soul discovery.

The lute makes a melody. It is caught up by sections of the choir, all of whom are neatly and comfortably seated, looking as if they could sit there forever without visible sustenance — air plants of song. The melody is turned and tossed around in the air, variation upon variation, always repeating but never the same, like a song by Gertrude Stein. This is what is called the centre of musical repetition. Bach used it, though less daring, less daunting than the Libyans. It is part of a very ancient Arabic vocal tradition, requiring long years of training. Still, wide awake, eyes hooded. Sleeping? Not a chance. A particular man will emit a fine luminous low G in the bass from an apparently comatosed-face. It is picked up by the tenors, and so the baritones, each range adding a little, cutting a piece and starting off on a fresh track. Improvisational — but the main body of the music never varies. Such voice groupings have been used from medieval times in the West. It may be so that, like the lute itself, the technique originated in the East where this sort of subtle vocal embroidery is more frequently used. Listeners cannot get lost because the performers themselves are never lost. But they nestle in their personal cocoons like moths until they break out to freedom and soar softly aloft.

And we with them. Do you have your directional instincts intact. Or are you off into the azure or merely the black pretending to be blue. Or does it matter? The beige gentlemen are still quietly at it after two hours. In fact they are warming up. The hours are passing and sideways movements are developing. Their voices — they can sing for hours — have taken on a vibrato with a humming intensity. Their spiral is mounting to its peak and the top is in sight. Don't panic. The chorus are bien plantée. Their force comes from the earth.

And so the inflammatory secret is out. Elemental composers like Bach and Verdi have used such groups in masses, motets, great choruses of war and liberation. Obeisance before almighty things always used this all-male-voiced tone. Like it or not, you are in the presence of *la forza del destino*. It is better, best even, to like it and thank the Libyan singers for revealing it to us in Ramadan.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Awad El-Shimi (Engravings)
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Daily 10am-2.30pm. Until 15 Feb.
El-Shimi's engravings have genarally combined an orientalist fascination with exotica with the absence of human figures.

Group Show
Exhibition Hall, Cairo Meridien Hotel, Garden City. Tel 354 8382. Daily 10am-12am. Until 15 Feb.
Paintings, sculptures and engravings by 30 Egyptian artists.

Esmat Dawestashi (Paintings & Sculptures)
Gallery Hotel Sofitel, Hurghada. Tel 065/442 261. Daily until 16 Feb.
Dawestashi's witty assemblages, first exhibited at the Mashrabiya gallery in Cairo transfer, in part at least, to Hurgheda.

Marilyn Batte (Paintings)
Opera House Gallery, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 342 0589. Daily 10am-1.30pm & 4.30pm-8.30pm, 16-25 Feb.

Latin American Paintings
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Boulos Hanna St, Dokki. Tel 360 1746. Daily exc Sat & Sun, 10am-2pm & 5pm-8pm, 16-28 Feb.

Reda Abdel-Salam (Paintings)
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily exc Sun, 10am-2pm & 6pm-10pm. Until 28 Feb.

Video Visions Cairo 2
El-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 9am-9pm. 13 Feb-1 March.
Installations and video works by Marie José Burki, Christoph Draeger, Simon Lamunière, Ahmed Hassouna, Fares Abdel-Kareem, Hassan Khan and Mohamed Abla, among others.

Sherif Abdel-Badie (Paintings)
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily exc Fri, 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm. 18 Feb-6 March.

Mohamed Abdel-Moneim (Drawings & Watercolours)
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 11am-8pm. Until 6 March.

Margo Veillon (Autoportraits)
Cairo Berlin Gallery, 17 Youssef El-Guindi St, Bab El-Louk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun, 12pm-8pm. 18 Feb-8 March.

Sixth Cairo International Biennale
Akhenaten Centre of Arts, 1 El-Maahad El-Swissri St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm-10pm. Cairo Opera Gallery, second floor, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 342 0592. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 15 March.
The Centre of Arts hosts works by artists from the US, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Palestine, South Africa, Morocco and Tunisia among others, in a show that has attracted mixed reactions from the critics. How far from the heritage can innovation go? A very long way, if the exhibits by Egyptian artists at this show are anything to go by.

Peggy Crawford (Photographs)
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 5422. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. 19 Feb-27 March.
The artist's 34 coloured photographs, including houses, villages, temples, doors, façades, huts and mosques, built of mud, reeds, coral and stone portray the Yemeni traditional architecture built of the earth.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the Ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.
A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including *mashrabiye*, lustreware ceramics, textiles, woodwork, coins and manuscripts drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mameluke periods and from other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners. A state of the art museum housing the contemporary art of the state.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956), the Alexandrian aristocrat who is considered one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

Shabab Imra'a (A Woman's Youth)
French Cultural Centre, Mounira Annex, 1 Madraset El-Hoqouq El-Ferensiya St, Mounira. Tel 354 7679. 19 Feb, 7pm.
Directed by Salah Abu Seif (1956), starring Taheya Carioca, Shoukry Sarhan, Shadia.

French Films
French Cultural Centre, Heliopolis Annex, 27 Sabri Abu Alam St, Ismailia Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 417 4824.
La Symphonie Fantastique (1942): directed by Christian Jaque, starring Jean-Louis Barrault and Renée St Cyr. *18 Feb, 7pm*
Farrebique (1946): directed by Georges Rouquier, starring the inhabitants of Farrebique. *19 Feb, 7pm.*

Sombras En Una Batalla (1993)
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, 20 Adly St, Kodak Passage, Downtown. Tel 337 1962. 13 Feb, 8.30pm.
Directed by Mario Camus.

Italian Films
Italian Cultural Institute, 3 El-Sheikh El-Marsafi St, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791.
Rocco E I Suoi Fratelli (1960): Directed by L Visconti. *15 Feb, 6pm.*
Il Postino (1995): directed by M Radford, starring Massimo Troisi and Philippe Noiret. *16 Feb, 8pm.*



Reda Abdel-Salam

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Bekhit We Adila II: El-Gardal Wel-Kanaka (Bekhit And Adila II: The Bucket And The Coffee Pot)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 5726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Horreya I, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. El-Horreya II, El-Horreya Mall, Roxy, Heliopolis. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, & 9pm. Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Starring Adel Imam and Sherine.

Imra'a Fawq El-Qemma (A Woman At The Top)
Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm. Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 5.30pm & 8.30pm.
With Nadia El-Guindi.

Hallaq Housh
El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Starring Laila Eloui.

Hassan El-Loll
Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm
Starring Ahmed Zaki.

Jingle All the Way
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
Arnold Schwarznegger in yet another film for the kiddiwinks.

MUSIC

National Arabic Music Ensemble & Cairo Opera Children's Choir
Main Hall, Opera House, Gezira. Tel 342 0589. 13 Feb, 8pm.
Conducted by Selim Sahab.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra
Main Hall, Opera House, as above. 15 Feb, 8pm.
Violinist Hassan Sharara, conducted by Charles Ansbacher, performs compositions by Mendelssohn and Dvorak.

Piano Recital
Small Hall, Opera House, as above. 16 Feb, 8pm.
With soloist Amal El-Shahed.

Jazz Recital
Gomhouriya Theatre, Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 14 & 15 Feb, 8.30pm.
Performed by Yehia Khalil.

Doppler Trio
Gomhouriya Theatre, as above. 19 Feb, 9pm.
Directed by Franz Albanese from the Metropolitan Opera, performing works by Doppler, Albanese, Plenizio and others.

THEATRE

Bahlool Fi Istambul (Bahlool In Istambul)
Ramsis Hilton Theatre, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm, Fri & Sun 8.30pm.

Hekmat Hanem... Almaz?
George Abiad Hall, Ezbekiya Theatre, Ataba Sq. Tel 591 1267. Daily 10pm.

Dastoor Ya Siadna (With Your Permission, Masters)
El-Fann Theatre, Nadi El-Musiqa St, Ramsis. Tel 578 2444. Daily 8.30pm.

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0804. Daily 8.30pm, Thur 10pm.
Starring Salah El-Saadani, directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

El-Ganzir (The Chain)
El-Salam Theatre, Qasr El-Aini. Tel 355 2484. Daily exc Mon, 9pm.

Ka'b 'Ali (High Heels)
Radio Theatre, 4 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 578 4910. Daily 8pm, Wed & Thur 10pm.

El-Zaim (The Leader)
El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 8.30pm, Wed & Thur, 10pm.

LECTURES

Linda Cohn-Kobelecky Discusses Her Works
Room 06, Social Science Building, Greek Campus, AUC, El-Sheikh Rihan St. Tel 357 6373. 19 Feb, 11am.

The Sacred Acropolis Rock From the Stone Age Until Today
Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 18 Sidi El-Metwalli St, El-Attarin, Alexandria. Tel (03) 482 1598. 14 Feb, 7pm.
Lecture by Arete Botsio.

Learn And Win
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3396. 19 Feb, 7pm.
Lecture by Fawzy Tajeddin Mohamed, from the Ministry of Education.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please telephone or send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

Around the galleries

A group exhibition, including works by 15 artists, is currently on show at **Picasso Gallery**. All the compositions are based on Arabic letters, and include paintings, ceramics and sculpture by a host of famous and lesser known artists.

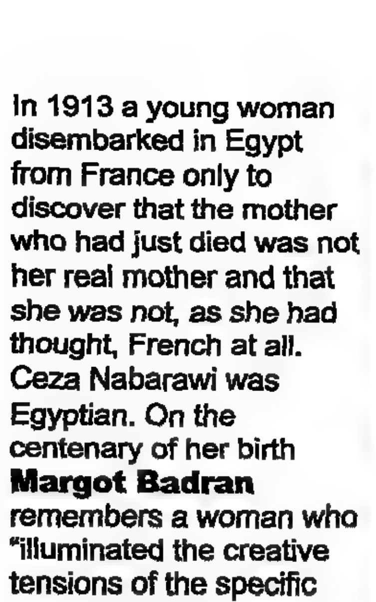
The **Atelier du Caire** hosts multimedia works with a faint aroma of the kitchen — masks, constructed in some instances from pasta and dried beans, by **Amal Mahmoud**, as well as tall ceramic vessels, modern updates of traditional forms and designs, by **Zeinab Abdel-Gawwad**.

The **Egyptian Centre for International Cultural Cooperation**, in Zamalek, hosts recent works, in watercolour and oil, by **Salwa Nur El-Din**, 35 of whose luminous landscapes adorn the walls.

Amal Mahmoud

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**

هكذا من الأصل



In 1913 a young woman disembarked in Egypt from France only to discover that the mother who had just died was not her real mother and that she was not, as she had thought, French at all. Ceza Nabarawi was Egyptian. On the centenary of her birth **Margot Badran** remembers a woman who "illuminated the creative tensions of the specific and universal... teaching that the East-West highway was not a one-way road from the West"



Ceza Nabarawi with her mentor Hoda Sha'rawi

Alternative visions of gender

Early this century the death of a mother precipitated a young girl's sudden passage from Paris to Egypt. Speaking perfect French, and wearing a hat, people would think she was a frangi. *Indeed, until that moment, she herself had thought she was French. Adila Nabarawi, the mother whose death she bitterly mourned, she had just learned, was not her "real" mother. Even her name was not her original name. Her first name had been Zeinab Murad. She was being sent to a woman called Fatma and her husband Mohamed Murad. She was shocked to discover they were her "real" parents and could not communicate with them. She was soon dispatched to her maternal grandfather Amin Pasha Abdullah (the son of an English engineer and convert to Islam who spoke French) and from his house in Cairo to Notre Dame de Sion School in Alexandria. When her father, who still exercised authority over her, learned she was wearing a hat — insufficiently modest and a Christian and Western practice — he ordered her to put on the veil. She refused to cover her face and she refused to go out. Her late mother's best friend, Hoda Sha'rawi, appeared on the scene, carrying a* habbara *and* yashmak. *She persuaded the young woman to put on the veil, saying: "Never mind. Today you will put on the veil but tomorrow we shall take it off."*

Ceza Nabarawi told me this story in 1967, shortly after we had met for the first time at a women's bazaar to raise money for the victims of the war. This narrative of return, identity confusion, and gender and culture shock was repeated like a litany many times over the years. On our first visit Ceza also told me a second story—a sequel.

Ten years after the "homecoming" related above, on a spring day in 1923, two veiled women returning from an international feminist conference in Rome arrived at the Cairo railway station. Ceza, now a woman of twenty-six, and Hoda Sha'rawi paused before descending from the train to pull the veils away from their faces. The large crowd of women welcoming them home cheered. Many also pulled back their veils. Only the eunuchs displayed displeasure. The two women took their unveiling a step further when they gave their photographs to the Egyptian press to publish. (The pictures appeared immediately in *Al-Lataif al-Musawwarah* and *Le Journal du Caire.)*

With these two stories Ceza framed the re-tellings of her life as an Egyptian feminist and nationalist. Out of profound gender and culture shock *Ceza gave birth to* herself as an Egyptian feminist and nationalist. She embraced the Egyptian identity that she fashioned for herself with fervor. She later became an Arab feminist and nationalist and, an international, what is now called, a global feminist.

In her day, "East" and "West" were conventionally construed as oppositional polarities, with the capacity to legitimize or to delegitimize. Ceza was never interested in applying a "cultural geiger counter" to her feminism, the pursuit of feminist roots was of no concern to her. Ceza claimed her/self, her culture, and her feminism as her own — as Egyptian. She was an amalgam of an "East" and "West" inscribed as indigenous. From Ceza I learned the possibilities of how one could be of a place or a culture — how not to get bogged down in post/colonial ascriptions. I learned how one can claim an identity without deploying it to quarantine "others" but rather to open it up to possibilities of inclusivity. She taught me the importance of being indigenous and "global" at the same time. She illuminated for me the creative tensions of the specific and universal. She taught me that the "East-West" highway was not a one-way road from the "West."

"Ceza's lessons" frequently occurred at her home in Maadi, which in the 1960s and 70s was still a quiet flower-filled suburb with thick trees shading its lanes. I always loved visiting Ceza during the fleeting jacaranda season when blue blossoms filled the sky. I would open the green painted wooden gate and walk down the short path to enter her building set back in a garden. I would climb to the second floor, where after a short ring at the bell, the door would be thrust open and Ceza would appear ushering me into her high-walled sanctum. Bookshelves lined the dining room which also served as a passage into the salon, beyond which was a sun-filled balcony. Ceza had a study crammed with books, papers, files, and photographs. It was a bursting, disheveled archive that showed signs of being constantly ransacked — but only by its owner as Ceza had learned over the years that what left never returned. Standing sentinel on two shelves in the front of the apartment was a complete set of *l'Egyptienne*, the monthly journal of the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) of which Ceza had been editor-in-chief during the 15 years of its publication.

In this world of secluded artefacts my history lessons began twelve years after the government under Nasser had forced the EFU to close as a feminist organisation (reborn soon after as a social service society regulated by the state.) By then, when some feminists (like Inji Aflatun and Duriyya Shafiq) had suffered imprisonment or house arrest, Ceza conducted her feminist activism outside Egypt, through the Women's International Democratic Federation, headquartered in Moscow. This was the radical future of Ceza's liberal feminism. In those days of heavy state surveillance and with no space for independent public feminism, learning about the Egyptian feminist movement was like doing "closet history." In between trips to the USSR or China, or countries of the Eastern Bloc, or coming from meetings abroad with American civil rights activists like Angela Davis, Ceza Nabarawi unfolded for me the stories of Egyptian feminism in the "liberal era". Ceza found a way to maintain her independence and integrity as a feminist, nationalist, and more recently a socialist by conducting her activism in the international arena. In relating her feminist past and continuing to forge a different feminist present, Ceza provided a lesson on how to "do" and how to think feminism, on the process of refiguring feminism, and how concretely embedded these projects are.

L'Egyptienne was Ceza Nabarawi's main feminist instrument in the 20s and 30s. Issued in French, the journal was directed at an indigenous readership of upper- and middle-class women (products of both private education and state schooling where French was a required language) and at a Western readership. (In 1937, the EFU founded *Al-Misriyya* to speak in Arabic to Egyptian and other Arab women; this was both a nationalist act and an effort to reach a wider readership whose sole language was Arabic.) Ceza used *l'Egyptienne* to fight double standards at home and to counter negative gender and national stereotypes abroad. During her first year as editor when, unlike other members of the press (men and foreign women), she was refused entry to the convocation of parliament, she exposed this discrimination in the feminist journal: *"The Egyptian woman who constitutes half the nation was totally forgotten."* She asked: *"Is it just that in this Egyptian land, so hospitable to foreigners, that our women should be the last to enjoy the rights and prerogatives accorded to others?"*

Ceza assumed the role of political activist with great energy and reported it in the EFU journal with equal relish. In 1931 Ceza was among the feminists arrested for demonstrating against the suppression of constitutional liberties by the Sidqi government. *"For the first time in our history women were imprisoned for a political question,"* she wrote. *"Women have proven that they are citizens conscious of their responsibilities and able to defend the liberties of their country, and champion the cause of the oppressed."* Aligning the project of the current reactionary regime with the colonial oppression of the past, Ceza declared: *"In 1919 women were one of the most influential forces in the nationalist movement. Today their campaign...was actively threatened by the [Egyptian] authorities who were outraged by the participation of women in political life."*

Ceza Nabarawi was a tireless defender of education for women at all levels. When she paid a visit to a new government school for elite girls in 1925 she was horrified to discover that the state itself had *"preserved aristocratic harem ways."* She reported: *"To appease male opinion concerning the education of women a large part of the curriculum is reserved for housekeeping, domestic economy, and the culinary arts. In this way, men who wish to see their future companions preserve the charms of the Chrysalis of former times applaud the government's effort to reconcile past ways with the present."* Ceza was not so much decrying instruction aimed at "modernizing" domestic skills (indeed the EFU later took on such a project) as troubled at a predominant emphasis placed upon women's domestic functions at the very moment when women were still new at claiming lives for themselves in public space, trying to take advantage of unprecedented educational and professional opportunities.

Ceza, and other feminists, were ever vigilant and sensitive to the propagation of a domestic destiny for women ("modernized" or not) because they were acutely aware of a real danger of politicisation of issues relating to women on the part of conservatives and reactionaries. Indeed, the notion of a safe domesticity for women endangered by their attendance at university was deployed for political ends. When liberals like university rector, Ahmad Lutfy Al-Sayyid, and dean, Taha Hussein, opposed the withdrawal of the constitution and the suppression of the democratic process — and suffered the loss of their university posts in the process — the Sidqi government tried to deflect attention away from this issue by indicting co-education as a danger to women and morality inflicted by university authorities. Ceza answered: *"The minister of education, forgets, no doubt, that the times of seclusion are over and that the main task of a minister of education is to prepare the young, who are entrusted to him, to meet the challenges of the times. If some people are blinded by outmoded prejudices, stubbornly failing to recognise the active part the woman always plays in all aspects of our national renaissance, it is not the business of the minister of education to ignore this process...Our world has evolved too much, whether you like it or not. Is it by making her frivolous, ignorant, and self-centred that you prepare her to victoriously take up the battle of life?"*

Two years later, Nabarawi was still raising her voice observing that the reactionary education minister whom she called "the Minister of Traditions": *"admirably serves the imperialist designs of Great Britain. This colonial power was always opposed to the development of education in Egypt. Is not ignorance the only way to enslave people and to keep them in a condition in which they are not able to free themselves?...Thus to solidify the dictatorial regime that is imposed on the country it is necessary to stifle the seeds of liberty. What greater danger is there than the education of the masses who will become conscious of their rights?"*

Some think of feminism as coming from "the West" to "the East" while failing to know — let alone imagine — an East to West circulation. In 1933, Ceza Nabarawi and Hoda Sha'rawi campaigned in several towns in the south of France for suffrage for Frenchwomen. They championed *enfranchisement for all the disenfranchised,* including those whom France still held under colonial rule. The Egyptian feminists were sending a message back home, as well.

Ceza demonstrated to western feminists the intersections of imperialism and the exploitation of women. A blatant example was the immunities the Capitulations gave to foreign persons and enterprises; this included protecting prostitution in Egypt. When European women, worried about the international traffic in women known as white slavery, came to Egypt to "enlighten" public opinion about the problem of prostitution, Ceza informed them that Egyptians had already taken stands against prostitution and that Europeans ought to enlighten themselves about how the Capitulations, still supported by Western governments, sustained the problem. She told a press conference that: *"the same states which rose up against the practice of slavery in the countries of the East* [continue] *to tolerate it there in a more infamous and inhumane form. How can civilised nations reconcile the rights of the individual to freedom with the prevailing legalised servitude of women?"*

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, when I was first learning about these early feminist causes from Ceza, the Capitulations had ended, as had legalised prostitution. At the beginning of the EFU-led movement the state had instituted equal education through secondary schools for females and males. University education, the doors of which first opened to women in 1929, continued to be co-educational. Under Nasser opportunities had also been expanded when education through university was made free for all Egyptians. Jobs were also guaranteed to all university graduates, women and men alike.

The state in the 50s and 60s, however, decided and controlled the agenda. It did not escape any of us then, and least of all Ceza, that the same state that democratized education and work opportunities, and had accorded women the vote in 1956 (32 years after the feminists had made their first suffrage demand) had truncated the democratic political process. Moreover, the state-promoted ideology of gender equality, expressed as public gender equality, or more accurately, as androgyny based on a male model, brought with it mixed results. It created a large-scale double burden (which the state did little to alleviate but rather women in the extended family bore). Masculinist hegemonies at home were not disturbed. When I asked Ceza about the biggest disappointments of the earlier feminist movement she included at the top of the list: continued restrictions on women's abilities to effect divorce (and related issues of settlements) and uncontrolled polygamy. While the former remained a serious perennial problem and the latter was of more limited practical concern, the ideological and political implications of no movement on these issues disturbed Ceza and other feminists. They were critical of the Nasser regime for not confronting these matters — for sustaining a patriarchal hegemony in the "private sphere." But there was no public space for dissent. (It was only in 1979 that important changes relating to divorce and polygamy were made when a new Personal Status Code was decreed from on high — to be rescinded and re-instated after feminist pressure, albeit in a watered-down form, in 1985).

"The same states which rose up against the practice of slavery in the countries of the East [continue] *to tolerate it there in a more infamous and inhumane form. How can civilised nations reconcile the rights of the individual to freedom with the prevailing legalised servitude of women?"*

By the end of the 1940s Ceza's relations with EFU feminists were strained. She tried, as vice-president of the EFU, (following the death of Hoda Sha'rawi in 1947) to breath new life into the organisation, speaking to a new generation of women. She formed the Youth Committee, attracting women from the left like Inji Aflatun, who went to women workers in poor quarters of Cairo to politicise them around issues of gender, class, and nation. Ceza was part of the Movement of the Friends of Peace agitating for the expulsion of the British from the Canal Zone. In 1952 when violence erupted in the Canal Zone, Ceza joined women across the political spectrum, from leftists to feminists to Islamists, within the Women's Committee for Popular Resistance who went out in public demonstrations.

In the post 1945 world when the world split into two opposing camps at the start of the Cold War, Ceza found it increasingly difficult to work within the International Alliance of Women (which the EFU had joined in 1923) which had grown increasingly conservative. Her impassioned defense of the cause of African peoples against the continuation of colonialism at the International Alliance of Women conference in Naples in 1953 was her final plea for justice within this arena. She could no longer operate within the Alliance. Nor, could she work any longer within the EFU. In 1953, exactly thirty years after she had been a founding member of the EFU Ceza quit the organisation. She joined the Women's International Democratic Federation. Within the the Democratic Federation Ceza agitated against imperialism, racism, and classism and on behalf of peace and the Palestine cause until her death in 1985.

Ceza was not happy with the reappearance of the veil in the 1970s and 80s, if only as hair covering. She, like other early feminists, had been forced to veil, which for them meant to cover their faces — rather than adopting the veil (in the form of hair covering and long, loose garments) as a matter of choice as young women were now beginning to do. The pioneers had fought hard to remove the veil and to remove the system of female oppression with which they associated it. They could not fit veiling (of whatever sort) into their ideology of feminism. Nor did they consider veiling the necessary mark of a good Muslim. If feminists of the 1990s can view veiling in more complicated terms, this was not so for Ceza and her generation. However, re-veiling was not the major issue for Ceza who, in the 70s and 80s, continued to be concerned about Palestine, peace, and the poor. She was a pragmatist who got on with her own life and tried to help other women get on with theirs.

Ceza Nabarawi, a staunch Egyptian and Arab feminist and nationalist, and an internationalist, was an "inclusivist." She became fully grounded in the Egypt to which she had been reintroduced as a girl grieving for a lost mother and bewildered by confusions of identity and culture in her new country. Through her feminism and nationalism she both created her Egyptian self and positioned herself in transnational contexts.

In remembering Ceza I would like to acknowledge the role she played in my own life. When I came to Egypt to live, casting my lot in through marriage, in the mid 60s I too (like Ceza several decades earlier) was shocked by matters of gender and culture. The conventions presented to me by many as "the" way seemed impossibly narrow and restrictive. My imagination set to work: there must be other ways, I conjectured. Meanwhile, I had heard of the feminist movement that had occurred earlier in Egypt — the public traces of which had all but disappeared in the 60s. I had sought out Ceza with the intention of learning about this history. She, and others, led me into the present through the door of their own feminist past. They confirmed my conviction that the restricted view of gendered propriety presented to me, if a dominant one of the day, was not the only one. There were alternative visions of gender within culture. There was the possibility to create a congenial place within — to belong and to be different. *I learned from her* — confirming a voice from within myself— that one did not have to be either/or — one could be both. That one did *not have to follow "the" path but that* one could create a path. That many possibilities exist "to be" and "to belong" within a culture and place. One day when we were having tea by the Nile, talking about the *history I was trying to write of the Egyptian feminist* movement, Ceza said to me: "I am glad you are doing it — you are one of us."

Margot Badran met Ceza Nabarawi in 1967 while researching the history of the early feminist movement in Egypt. From then until Ceza Nabarawi's death in 1985 they explored the past and debated the present. Ceza Nabarawi occupies a prominent place in Badran's book Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt *(Princeton University Press: 1994: American University in Egypt Press: 1996). Parts of this piece are from a book Badran is writing about her experiences in Egypt from the 1960s to the 90s.*

Plain Talk

I have just received the complete catalogue of the American University Press for 1997. It is quite a rich harvest of newly translated books from Arabic as well as a number of original titles. The catalogue cover has the photo of Naguib Mahfouz, who is a central figure in the activities of the Press.

One can say that the AUC Press has played an important role in introducing modern Egyptian literature into the outside world. It is a job that deserves a word of gratitude from us and from Egyptian men of letters. It is difficult to count the number of Egyptian and Arab authors who have been introduced to the English reading public through the AUC Press.

Looking through this year's catalogue one is impressed by the variety of titles and the introduction of new series. Aside from new translations of some of Mahfouz's books, such as *Echoes of an Autobiography*, and *Arabian Nights and Days*, one finds translations of *Houses Behind the Trees* by Mohammed El-Bisatie, and*Wiles of Men* by Salwa Bakr, *Rites of Assent* by Abdel-Hakim Qasim and works by other contemporary Egyptian writers who are given a unique opportunity to reach the outside world.

It would be interesting to trace the history of the AUC Press in Egypt and its contribution in serving Egypt, its history and its writers. Established in 1960 the Press specialised in Middle Eastern and Egyptian studies — history, literature, and social sciences. Since its inception the Press has witnessed great political changes both in Egypt and the Middle East. Every change in the region left its mark on the Press in two ways: the changes created new subjects to be dealt with by the Press and secondly they affected the sales of books. With every crisis in the region for instance, thousands of tourists cancelled their visits, and since tourists are purchasers of books about Egypt, there have been marked falls in sales. But in spite of these problems, the Press managed to continue and now publishes at least 20 titles every year.

One of the welcome additions to the AUC Press publications is a series on the arts — books on Margo Veillon and David Roberts have already appeared, and now a forthcoming volume on Gazbia Sirry, *Lust for Colour*, is about to be published. Gazbia is one of Egypt's leading modern artists, with a varied and innovative career of almost 50 years. Her paintings have been exhibited from Stockholm to Dakar, from Sao Paulo to Beijing and are held in public and private collections around the world.

AUC Press also publishes an edition of the *Description de l'Egypte*. With Napoleon's expedition to Egypt (1798-1801) came the first printing press. French scholars were fascinated by what the 176 savants saw and encountered in Egypt. The reports and illustrations of Bonaparte's artists were published in twenty six volumes. The *Description* is the most complete visual record ever made of a country's culture, past and present.

Ancient Egypt has received much attention from AUC Press. Dozens of books about Ancient Egypt have been published and the 1997 catalogue contains a number of new titles, including *The Ancient Egyptians*, *Life in the Old Kingdom*, *Life of the Ancient Egyptians*, and *The Tomb of Nefertari*, which is a complete guide to this "House of eternity" explaining the vignettes and texts that tell the story of Nefertari's journey to immortality. The tomb has been subject to a nine year programme of conservation.

While giving such attention to Pharaonic Egypt, the modern country has not been neglected. A guide of Cairo has just been published which is described by the *New York Times* as 'indispensable' for any visitor to the country's capital. A collection of cartoons by Mustafa Hussein, one of Egypt's leading cartoonists is also among the newly published titles, alongside *Sinai and the Red Sea*, *Water in the Arab World* as well as two books on Egyptian and Middle Eastern cooking.

A book which is most welcome is *Doria Shafik, the Egyptian Feminist*, by Cynthia Nelson. Doria Shafik, a feminist who "helped define what it means to be a modern Arab woman", was a poet, political activist and romancier. Her French novel *l'Esclave Sultane* about Shagaret El-Dor is the only novel about the Muslim queen who ruled over Egypt. Doria was maligned and intentionally ignored by both historians and Egyptian feminists and Cynthia Nelson's book brings to life the bold and gifted leader.

Mursi Saad El-Din





Celebrating the *Eid* in style

MORE than for grownups, the *Eid* is a time for children to celebrate, writes **Nagwa Ibrahim** who, with photographer **Sherif Sonbol**, attended the celebrations at one of the German schools and at the Inqadh El-Tofoula orphanage. Most schools put on a party for the *Eid* and this year the children of this particular school had a chance to let their imagination run wild, dressing up fancily for the occasion.

At Inqadh El-Tofoula, the atmosphere was warm and friendly. Baba Abdel-Fattah and Mama Zeinab, acting as parents, were hosting a party for 350 boys.

Inqadh El-Tofoula is an orphanage which caters to boys only. Around 350 boys of various ages are living there, the younger going to school at the orphanage itself where elementary classes have been established, the older to a nearby secondary school. The children enjoyed their party but they said what they liked best about festive occasions were the visits of friends to the orphanage and the possibility to talk about their lives and activities.



The mouse that roared

It is such a beautiful day: not too cold, but just cold enough to give one the necessary boost of energy. Forget the shopping, I tell myself, just go for a leisurely drive. My car is purring, I have plenty of gas and I am not in any particular hurry to get to work.

I turn the tape recorder on. Music is in order. I hum along, somewhat off-key, and after a while I feel like singing at the top of my voice. Why not? I am all alone. Suddenly, coming from nowhere, a car, one of those sleek multimillion affairs, grazes my side mirror, swerves in front of me and, a few seconds later, comes to an abrupt halt. I just have the time to glimpse the passengers, two indistinct shapes who are going to die with me, before I slam my foot on the brakes with all my might.

I make it just in time. The distance between my car and theirs is negligible, but my fright is not. There are huge black spots in front of my eyes. Did my retina come unstuck? My heart is beating madly: that horrible roaring is blood pounding in my ears. I am going to be sick. With great effort I pull myself together and decide to get out of the car and politely approach the offender, offering to pay for his driving lessons. Before my knees stop shaking enough to allow me a dignified descent, I hear the screeching of tyres on the asphalt. The car from hell has taken a flying start just as the traffic lights are turning red. The policeman looks surprised, but shrugs and concentrates on stopping the on-coming traffic, namely me.

I am no longer scared, just abominably furious. Once more, a beast will go unpunished. I feel the bitter taste of impotent rage in my mouth. This is too much. No one should be asked to tolerate the behaviour of such drivers. This one will have to pay. For all the others as well. I floor the gas pedal and somehow miss the traffic policeman; maybe I flew over him, coming to think of it; he was standing just in front of my car wearing the same surprised look.

I speed madly but wisely, in hot pursuit of the offender. My car has sprouted wings. I weave adroitly through the heavy traffic, amazed at my newly acquired skills, leaping over the vehicles standing in my way. I never knew I could drive with such maestria. I should think of participating in races.

I increase the volume of the music. The least such exploits require is a triumphal march, I tell myself. I have to content myself with Handel's Coronation Anthems, but no matter. In no time I have caught up with my future victim who, unaware of what is going to happen, is blabbing proudly into a cellular phone. One hand clutches the tiny phone, almost obscured by its owner's sausage-like fingers; the other is negligently draped over the wheel. The passenger next to him is a woman. Of course. Maybe he was trying to impress her. I shall help him do just that.

I am now cruising parallel to the man-cum-cellular-phone. Miraculously, I have a basketful of eggs handy. I grab one and throw it at him. It hits his glasses, wiping his satisfied smile off his face instantly. "Goal", I yell, and reach for another projectile. The enemy, glasses dripping with raw egg, is slowing down, his vision blurred by the goo which I see dribbling down the side of his nose. Now I find that I have a ripe tomato in my hand. I squash it a bit for maximum effect and, taking careful aim, I hit him squarely on his bald spot. "That will teach you," I shout.

The woman is screaming. I have began bombarding them systematically, alternating eggs with an assortment of vegetables which have also materialised at the right moment. I observe a couple of overripe figs on the woman's lap, next to the cellular phone. The man is telling her something, probably to call the police at once. He is busy giving her instructions while trying to wipe his glasses. She is obviously not familiar with state-of-the-art technology.

I aim again, and my next egg lands on the glasses, just where I wanted it, completely obscuring his right lens. Not only do I command my car — a machine with which my relations are usually, at best, ambivalent — in the most masterful way, but my aim is suddenly true. A few minutes ago I was the kind of person who would not have been able to hit an elephant in a corridor with a football — supposing I would ever want to do such a thing — and look at me now! I haven't missed once. This is so nice. I feel my hatred of motorists melt away. I throw my next egg almost gently. This time, he has to stop. I think I hit him in the eye.

I contemplate the alternatives: should I press a button and, James Bond-like, slice through their car with my electronic knives? But that is a bit déjà vu. Pulverise them with my atomiser? Too easy. I finally settle for something more practical but nevertheless effective: I remove swiftly the lid of my thermo-cup and spill my scalding coffee on the lap of the woman still trying to work the cellular phone, a task obviously beyond her meagre capabilities. She yelps. I laugh heartily and nudge her. "Tell your husband to take driving lessons," I whisper, as if confidentially.

I revel in the sound of their sobs. They are sorry. They promise solemnly to look in their mirrors and give other drivers on the road their rights. They will abide by the code, they swear. They will give the right of way where it is due and use the correct blinker, the right one before turning right and the left before turning left. All they are asking for is my forgiveness. The cars behind me are all honking their approval. The traffic policeman is approaching to congratulate me. I turn the volume of the music up to celebrate my heroic victory. No doubt this is going to be in the papers with a full description of my car and from now on no motorist will dare mess with me. I am John Wayne of the highways... I am Buffalo Bill of the intersections.

Why are they still honking? Should I come out and salute? "Are you all right?" asks the policeman solicitously. "Of course I am all right... The lights are green? So what... Didn't you see what I just did? And why are you taking my number? My licence?" Of course... there is no place for decisive action in this world. I reach for my cup of coffee, then remember: I didn't bring any with me today.

Fayza Hassan

Trading places

An agreement between the government and the Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE) on behalf of the garbage collectors of Torah El-Maadi may be a step forward, but the community is apprehensive, reports **Mariz Tadros**

Francees Street, the main thoroughfare in El-Zabbalin neighbourhood in Torah El-Maadi, is suspiciously clean. The stench is unmistakable, but there are no over-flowing garbage bags or children rummaging through mountains of rubbish — at least not visibly. This neighbourhood is in many ways different from the garbage collectors' community in El-Muqattam. For one thing, the streets are wider, and spacious two- and three-storey buildings are being erected all around the area. The smell, as well, seems to be a degree or two less suffocating to the outsider.

Until recently, the 2,000 or so inhabitants of El-Zabbalin in Torah El-Maadi feared that they would be forcibly resettled on 30 feddans of desert land in El-Qattamiya. After much lobbying, Yossreya Loza, a parliamentarian and head of the Association for the Protection of the Environment (APE), an Egyptian non-governmental organisation (NGO) working with the *zabbalin* community in the area, struck a deal with the authorities with the backing of the People's Assembly. The *zabbalin* may stay in their homes, but their work — garbage, the pigs they raise, and all — will be transferred to El-Qattamiya.

The plan, explained Loza, is to allow people to stay in their homes, while moving their livelihood to the new dumping site. Eventually, this will eliminate the environmental and health hazards associated with humans and animals living side by side, surrounded by rubbish. In the meantime, the APE is working to upgrade the neighbourhood and create new ways of dealing with the garbage.

Like the *zabbalin* in Muqattam, those in Torah El-Maadi are originally from Upper Egypt. Initially, they lived and worked in Imbaba and Bab El-Bahr. "They were moved from Imbaba to Torah El-Maadi in 1971 by a governor's decree. They did not move there of their own accord and they did not seize the land illegally," Loza said.

The eight acres of land they were allocated in Torah El-Maadi was desert, with no infrastructure or existing services. The closest urbanised area was Sarayat El-Maadi — a fair distance away. As Maadi became increasingly urbanised, the *zabbalin* came under attack because of the potential for environmental damage to the overall community.

In 1991, a government decree allotted 30 feddans in El-Qattamiya to the *zabbalin* of Torah El-Maadi to use as a dumping ground. At the time, there was no mention of resettlement. They never got the land. Last year, they were asked to relocate to El-Qattamiya, "but according to Law 1107 of 1996 (which stipulates that any citizen who built his home before 1984 owns the land on which he settled), they have every right to stay in Torah El-Maadi. According to this law, they are not illegal settlers since they moved to the area over 25 years ago," stressed Loza. She further explained that the *zabbalin*, 71 per cent of whom are illiterate, were not aware of their rights under this law.

When the APE first started working in the area in 1993, it was very different from what it is today. Francees Street, adjacent to a car-dumping lot, was piled high with garbage. The APE recently built a massive wall separating the two, and Francees Street, paved and expanded, is now 18 metres wide. It was decided too that all side streets would be at least 10 metres in width. "There was no way a fire engine, ambulance or police car could pass through before. There were no paved streets, and everything was haphazardly built," explained Dr Ayman Ghanem, general manager of the Torah El-Maadi project.

A team of 50 young *zabbalin* was formed by the APE. They were hired to raise community awareness about environmental and health issues. One of their projects, for instance, was to encourage people to raise their pigs far from the area in which they live. Residents who gave up their thatched homes for an apartment in one of 51 newly-built blocks were allowed to keep a small yard where garbage used to feed the animals is piled.

A pilot project, organised by the Association of the *Zabbalin's* Sons and Daughters in Manial and Dar El-Malak, studied the effects of separating garbage into two piles — one organic and one inorganic. The project showed that if households separated their garbage themselves, this would facilitate the task of the *zabbalin* and would be environmentally wiser. The APE is hoping to start a similar project in Maadi with the hope that separating refuse at the household level will make the recycling process easier for the *zabbalin*. In the long run, this would also reduce pollution of the environment, since insecticides, heavy metals and batteries are not always disposed of properly and often find their way into water sources.

Efforts are being made to replace donkey carts with small trucks, possibly through loans given out by the Social Fund for Development, "because the donkeys are continuously being led to and from the dumping ground and sources of garbage collection. Disease can easily be spread in the neighbourhoods where the *zabbalin* circulate," warned Ghanem.

Despite efforts to upgrade the area, and although the *zabbalin* have lived in Torah El-Maadi for 25 years, basic infrastructure is still lacking. "For a long time the tankers which removed sewage were then used to transport potable water to the neighbourhood. Those who found the water too dirty used to hire trucks, fill them with jerricans of water and transport them back to Torah El-Maadi. This was costly for the people," explained Ghanem.

Some families do have fresh water today, but these do not even amount to a quarter of the total number of households in the area. There are still no sewage facilities. There is no electricity — which impedes the initiation of many recycling projects. There are 18 small generators in the area; one is used to provide a few hours of light for the Mother and Child Centre which the APE set up in May 1996.

Although the Mother and Child Centre is not open 24 hours a day, it is the only medical centre in the area, and the garbage collectors often go there with health complaints. Chest infections, the number one complaint reported by health officer Dr Lilian Awad, are related partly to the fumes inhaled from the combustion of garbage and plastic. Living in a damp, badly lit environment also contributes to cases of pneumonia, asthma and chest allergies, especially among children. Furthermore, "because of their constant contact with the garbage, children sometimes suffer from parasitic infections, especially worms and lice," Awad explained. Once a week, the children come to the centre for a shampoo, shower and anti-lice treatment.

If mothers maintained standards of hygiene amongst their children, there would be a dramatic drop in diarrhoea and other diseases contracted when the children come into contact with the animals, conceded Awad.

With literacy, health and environmental programmes underway, more attention will be focused on setting up a crisis intervention and management centre. "Although it has only happened a few times in this neighbourhood, it is really horrific when a fire grips one home and moves on to the next few. People still don't have the skills to cope with this kind of crisis," Awad commented.

The fact that non-usable garbage is heaped outside homes and left there for days on end, further increases the risks. This is not the *zabbalin's* fault, stressed Naeem Fayez, who collects garbage mostly from El-Basateen, a neighbourhood close to Old Cairo. "We have to pay LE 50 to have the useless rubbish picked up, and we have nowhere to dump it."

Soad Fathi, his wife, throws the morning's rubbish into four piles: food for the pigs; plastic and bones into sacks to be sold; cardboard in its own sellable stack; and the remainder onto the growing pile opposite her door. Fayez frowns at the thought that he will soon have to move his garbage and his animals to El-Qattamiya. He is not particularly happy with his one room and backyard: "I wouldn't mind moving to Aswan, if I had some sort of truck to carry the garbage from the area where it is collected up to the dumping site. My donkeys can't carry such large piles to El-Qattamiya from El-Basateen — they barely make it to here. I make anything from LE150 to LE200 a month, and have ten children to feed, so how am I supposed to afford a truck?"

For 41-year-old Fakhri Francees, owner of the district's coffee shop on Francees Street, the arrangement allowing the garbage collectors to continue living where they are, while moving the garbage and pigs to El-Qattamiya, is reasonable. Even though it may mean fewer customers at his coffee shop during part of the day, Francees believes that the neighbourhood would be a much better place if the animals were removed.

To Francees, the authorities coming in with bulldozers to demolish the inhabitants' homes represent the real menace. The savings he invested in the coffee shop and the two-storey building be constructed for his family would have been destroyed. "This was the blood and sweat of 25 years of hard work. I told them you'll have to bulldoze me before you pull down my home."

Francees had worked as a garbage collector in Imbaba until he was moved to Torah El-Yahoud, not far from Torah El-Maadi. His family then moved to Torah El-Maadi, where he continued to work as a garbage collector until he made enough money to buy his coffee shop. "The decision to allow people to continue to live here was a real relief for us... although we still lack so many basic services," he said. Children like his nine-year-old daughter Amira never had an opportunity to start school because the closest ones are in Muqattam and Old Cairo.

"In short, we need technical training centres for recycling garbage, we need two trucks for the transport of garbage to the new sites, especially for the poorer *zabbalin* who can't access their own means of transport, and we need contracting companies to build roads in Torah El-Maadi. This is only the beginning," are *Loza's optimistic last words.*

Sufra Dayma

Simple biscuits and cookies

Ingredients:
1 cup butter
3/4 cups powdered sugar
2 cups white flour
2 eggs
1tsp baking powder
Vanilla

Method:
Beat the butter vigorously with an electric mixer until it becomes whitish in colour, then add the sugar and continue beating. Add the eggs and vanilla and beat again until they all blend well together. Gradually add the flour mixed with the baking powder and sifted, while beating at a very low speed. When all ingredients blend well, continue blending by hand. Smear baking pans with butter, then form into shapes according to your taste and bake in a moderate preheated oven. You can add some cocoa or chocolate powder plus a dash of milk to some of the dough to obtain chocolate cookies. This is a quick and easy recipe which can be a pleasant alternative to the *kahks*, often considered too heavy.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

The Ottoman twilight

Nostalgia for what? **Nigel Ryan** ponders

Café Corniche, a newish outlet in the Semiramis, makes a none too subtle appeal, in its advertising at least, to the seemingly insatiable nostalgia for times past. "Nostalgically yours" the flyers announce. But nostalgia for what?

A glimpse at the menu answers that. It is divided into four sections — "Sultan's Salads", "Pasha's Pizzas and Pies", "Supreme Sandwiches" and "Turkish Delights". This litany to the Ottoman twilight is further divided into themed entries, including "Ameer's choice" which rather intriguingly promises "tarts of your desire". And all of this in a corner of the foyer of the Semiramis.

Things, of course, really are not what they used to be, and the remnants of a Turkish ascendancy now have a decidedly Scandinavian feel. Did Suleiman really know his way around a smörgåsbord? The Vikings are reputed to have reached Constantinople by sailing down the river systems of Eastern Europe, and no doubt culinary historians are even now at work on the history of the pickled herring in the eastern Mediterranean. But Café Corniche has got there first, offering a fishy "Salmon Bey", described, in Supreme Sandwiches, as "Gravlax, Norwegian Salmon and a Rollmop on Volkorn bread with cabbage and cumin salad".

Nostalgia — of sorts — headlining the menu, seems also to have dictated the choice of furniture. Dark bentwood tables, with old marble tops, have been rooted out from somewhere, and really are rather nice. The bentwood chairs, though, are perhaps too twee to be entirely comfortable, and the good intentions of the design consultant obviously did not stretch to the panelled column by the cold cabinet, which boasts shelves and bar stools. When all you have to work with, though, is a section of the vast granite clad foyer of an international hotel, good intentions are almost inevitably never going to be quite enough since foyers, be they airport, railway terminus, or big hotel, have a very hard time being anything other than transit-land.

Was it merely perversity that led me to order, amid this array of Ottoman inspired nomenclature, a simple Pyramid Club? Certainly the description on the menu was less lavish than many, comprising an unembellished listing of ingredients — bacon, chicken, lettuce egg — with details of garnish — twists of cucumber and pickles. But when the sandwich arrived the twists of cucumber had turned into slices, the pickles were absent and the bacon, by a process of elimination, was eventually identified as the processed pink slices adjacent to the egg. A fairly healthy sandwich though, and one that might constitute an almost hearty breakfast.

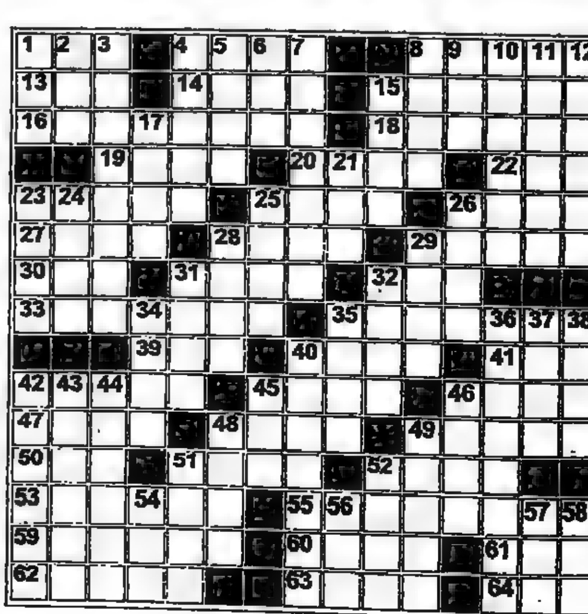
The orange juice was fresh and the capuccino truly excellent. The waiters all wore embroidered waistcoats and baggy trousers, and remained affable despite the fancy dress. The bill, for fruit juice, sandwich and coffee in this corner of the foyer — LE 46.

Café Corniche, Semiramis Inter-Continental, Garden City

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour



Across

1. Turf (3)
4. They come as "split" or "chick" (4)
8. Ankles (5)
13. Sheep's mom (3)
14. Torture; framework (4)
15. Mackerel-like fish (6)
16. Recess (8)
18. Administer the oath of office (6)
19. Avowal (4)
20. Adv. denoting a thing (4)
22. Roman 56 (3)
23. Cauterise (5)
25. Experts (4)
26. French saints, abb. (4)
27. Woe is me! (4)
28. The... = lavatory (4)
29. Reproductive cell (5)
30. Make a careful examination of scheme, candidate, etc. (3)
31. Lilliputian; petty (4)
32. Female rabbit (3)
33. Carry out (7)
35. In the forefront (7)
39. 2.5 acres (3)
40. Born (3)
42. A European "mother" (5)
45. Busy insects (4)
47. Bad; harmful (4)
48. Prayer direction (4)
49. Hit the sack (5)
50. ... and void (3)
51. Whippersnapper (4)
52. Impersonates (4)
53. To strain (6)
55. Bamboozler (8)
59. Habit (6)
60. And (4)
61. Harem room (3)
62. Extortioner (5)
63. Security agreement (4)
64. Type of fabric (3)

DOWN

1. Behold (3)
2. Allow as valid (3)
3. Explode violently (8)
4. Talk foolishly (5)
5. Per (4)
6. Execution (3)
7. Vague; giving a rough outline (7)
8. Breach of duty (4)
9. Cakes...Ale (3)
10. A bridge in Venice (6)
11. Even the smallest coin; Dutch coin (6)
12. Convert into electrically charged particles (6)
15. Scarves (4)
17. Hand-me-downs (4)
21. A fowl (3)
23. Except (4)
24. Evergreen oak (4)
26. Be sick (4)
28. Sacking material (4)
29. Category (4)
31. Genuine; unadulterated (4)
32. Sleep; bed (4)
34. Man, Sc. (4)
35. ... of clay - fundamental weakness (4)
36. Progenitor; forefather (8)
37. French man's name (4)
38. Bottomless (4)
40. Fierce (7)
42. Reflective; cerebral (6)
43. Pilot (6)
44. Thin; weaken (6)
45. Bleat (3)
46. Meads (4)
48. Sea eagle (4)
49. Cutlery item (5)
51. Herb, jumbled (4)
52. Polygonal recess (4)
54. Spasmodic contraction (3)
56. Roman 1051 (3)
57. Epic (5)
58. Slight blow (3)

Last week's solution

Al-Ahram: A *Diwan* of contemporary life

169 Colonial power play at Egypt's expense at the beginning of this century is the central theme of this instalment of the *Diwan* series. Our chronicler, **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk**, pores over many old issues of *Al-Ahram* to tell the story and ramifications of the 1904 political collusion between Britain, which then occupied Egypt, and France, which vied with the British for influence in the country. The two powers signed the so-called Entente Cordiale in which they agreed to bury the hatchet and share influence in Egypt. The agreement was a blow to the Egyptian nationalist movement struggling to end British occupation. The nationalists lost the battle, but not the war



"The Egyptian question" was the headline that greeted *Al-Ahram*'s readers on the morning of 21 April 1904. The article reported "the communiqué issued by the Republic of France pertaining to the agreement concluded between France and Great Britain over Egypt." This agreement, published eight days previously, marks the switch in the relationship between the two most powerful colonial powers of the age from long-standing animosity to sworn friendship. In the words of *Al-Ahram*, "This agreement marks the greatest political action to inaugurate the 20th century because it implies that England and France — the greatest colonial powers and civilised nations in the world — no longer have vital differences between them with regard to any area of the globe, now that both nations are fully sated with the possessions they have come to own and now that there no longer remains any territory that could become target of the rivalry between them."

The agreement alluded to in the above press release was what later became known as the Entente Cordiale that cooled the traditional antagonism between London and Paris and ultimately paved the way for their alliance in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I. It was also a landmark agreement in the history of these colonial powers' territorial rivalry, signifying a historic breakthrough from confrontation to negotiation.

For the nationalist movement in Egypt which had long relied on French support to countervail the British occupation, the implications were disastrous.

No other event since the Fashoda incident, that almost brought France and England to the brink of war six years previously, had stirred such a frenzy of academic interest both in Egypt and abroad. Yet, beyond the plethora of these scholastic works, there remains the day-to-day contemporary reaction to such events, a dimension one can only glean through the eyes of the national press of the time. *Al-Ahram* stands as the prime candidate to provide such insight.

On 17 March 1904 *Al-Ahram* carried a Reuters report to the effect that France and England had resolved to settle all their outstanding differences over their colonies and that they had succeeded in reaching an agreement over a range of issues, among which was the "Egyptian question." Five days later the newspaper noted, as a form of apology to its readers for not having given the subject its appropriate attention, "We had not commented on the Reuters story because we did not trust its veracity." In its 22 March edition the newspaper attempts to impress upon its readers that it had been aware of the negotiations between the two colonial powers eight months previously when a senior French official visited London.

The true reason *Al-Ahram* did not cover the initial news about the Entente Cordiale until "some of our esteemed readers expressed their surprise at our silence with regard to the Reuters story" was that the editors found themselves forced to confront one of their most firmly entrenched policies. Since it was founded just over a quarter of a century earlier, *Al-Ahram* had a distinctly French-oriented bias. With the onset of British occupation, its stance was thus easily determined since nationalist interests easily coincided with the French opposition to the British presence in Egypt. The newspaper's stance vis-à-vis the British was eminently suitable to the prevalent mood of Egyptian public opinion. Against this background, one can understand why, after the news of this Anglo-French pact broke *Al-Ahram* remained silent for another two weeks.

Al-Ahram broke its silence on 8 April with an article entitled "The Egyptian question," which covered nearly the entire front page. But unlike the other newspapers, its reaction was to play down the significance of the agreement: "This agreement does not *bury the Egyptian* question beneath a decision that was taken at a distant remove... On the contrary, the issue is still alive and in full force. France does not have the right to give Egypt to England and England has no right to demand Egypt from France. Egypt is still the property of the Ottoman sultan and its affairs are governed by international conventions that cannot be dissolved without the consent of all concerned nations. No single nation has the right to stand as proxy for another in this matter."

In purely legal terms, the article continues, the agreement that has been so acclaimed *in the British press, cannot have* such a profound effect since "it alters not a single letter of the Ottoman imperial edict of 1841, the treaty of 1879 or any subsequent treaties." More importantly, the newspaper notes that the agreement may well facilitate certain matters of major importance to Egypt. "Instead of the perpetual haggling, the Egyptian administration may now be able to obtain the desperately needed finances to construct dams and reservoirs to contain the water of the Nile and to allocate a good portion of this to Sudan. There are currently six million pounds of untapped resources in the debt fund. This fund gives nothing to the Egyptian government because such allocations require the approval of all the nations involved. France alone has objected to providing those finances." Egypt, therefore, can only stand to gain, "because if that money is released, it can only be spent on improving Egypt's service utilities under the supervision of the debt fund."

As further details were revealed concerning the Entente Cordiale, *Al-Ahram* would find it difficult to retain its equanimity. Two weeks later, the newspaper published its text in full. The following summarises its most important provisions.

Article One states, "The government of His Majesty the King of Great Britain hereby states that it has no intention of changing the political situation in Egypt and the government of the Republic of France for its part declares that it will not obstruct the activities of Great Britain in that country, whether by demanding clarification with regard to the term of occupation or in any other manner. The two parties agreed to place the general administration of Egyptian antiquities under a French archaeologist as was previously the case and that the French schools shall continue to operate under their previous freedom."

Article Two states, "The government of His Majesty pledges to respect the rights of France in Egypt in accordance with all pertinent agreements and conventions inclusive of the right to navigate between the Egyptian ports that have been conceded to France."

According to Article Four, both parties committed themselves to the freedom of commerce between Egypt and the Maghreb and to the principle of parity in customs duties and other such levies imposed upon goods and transportation.

Article Five stipulated that "Great Britain shall use its influence in Egypt to ensure the welfare of French subjects employed in the Egyptian administration, so as to ensure that there is no discrepancy between their treatment and that of their British counterparts."

Article Six, the last article directly pertaining to Egypt, called upon Great Britain to consent to the *1888 Constantinople* Convention guaranteeing freedom of passage through the Suez Canal.

With the contents of the agreement squarely before it, *Al-Ahram* had no choice but to face the fact that it constituted a collusion of the first order between the colonial powers. Nothing in it served the interests of Egypt. The newspaper's editors were faced with two alternatives. Either they could adhere to their traditional policy of defending French policies or they could resolve to expose the truth about the new agreement. Their choice became apparent over the course of the following days.

On 13 April the newspaper abandoned its former optimism, publishing an article which vented its anger on all parties with the exception of France. The first to be targeted were Egyptian politicians who "did not form a committee to attend the conference in London in order to demand Egypt's rights and to seek its salvation. Indeed no one attended that conference in order to speak on behalf of Egypt apart from the founder of *Al-Ahram* whose voice had grown hoarse from repeated appeals for such a committee."

Egyptian society was also to be blamed, because the Egyptian people "have become so torn and divided that they are unable to reach a consensus over demanding their due rights and autonomy."

The agreement provided *Al-Ahram* with the occasion to enumerate a host of old and new ills the British inflicted upon Egypt and the Egyptians. Discrimination in government employment headed the list, as though "Egypt was the training ground for British administrators, pushing out our experienced elders to make way for their young and inexperienced amateurs." The British were also responsible for hampering the development of Egyptian parliamentary institutions. They had established a legislative council (Majlis Shura Al-Qawanin) in 1883 yet they did nothing over the following two decades to expand the council's authorities and to enhance the dignity of representative office.

That France was spared much of *Al-Ahram*'s wrath under the circumstances is astonishing but understandable. Indeed, the newspaper was surprisingly frank in declaring its position. "If we were to cast the blame for Egypt's present situation on any nation, France could not be that nation." The French were well compensated for relinquishing any claim to Egypt. They secured their influence in Niger, North Africa, half of Siam, the Hebrides and they ensured the neutrality of the Suez Canal which originally had been the first major sign of French influence in Egypt. By virtue of the agreement "they managed to resolve all their vital differences with the British. Henceforth, if any contentions do arise they will be minor and can be resolved in the councils of arbitration provided for in the agreement. We therefore cast no blame upon France."

Whether or not one detects a certain sarcasm in these words, it certainly did not escape *Al-Ahram* that while France might *have abandoned the Egyptian nationalist* movement, it did not relinquish its interests in the country and had no intention of doing so. For example, it staunchly resisted London's continual efforts to end the capitulation system under which French interests in Egypt enjoyed considerable advantages. Even in the wake of World War I and the declaration of the British protectorate over Egypt, France still attempted to cling to privileges. The French also sought to defend the freedom of the French-owned newspapers in Egypt, even if some of these were published in Arabic. Evidently, the British imagined that the Entente would give them carte blanche to restrict the freedom of the press. To defend themselves, many newspaper owners sold their newspapers, in name only, to foreigners and particularly to French expatriates, in order to avail themselves of the greater margin of freedom the French-owned press continued to enjoy in Egypt. Although the British protested vociferously, Paris remained steadfast in its support of all the newspapers that had come under French patronage.

The French were also intent upon preserving the influence of French culture in Egypt as represented by their religious and secular schools and the Department of Antiquities. So strong was this influence that the British High Commissioner Lord Allenby wrote a lengthy report entitled "The *Conflict* Between the Latin and Anglo-Saxon Cultures in Egypt" in which he confessed that the former continued to enjoy considerable prevalence. That Allenby wrote this report in 1925, about 20 years after the Entente Cordiale was signed, stands as testimony to the extraordinary sway of French culture in Egypt after more than 40 years of British occupation.

Returning to 1904 and the Egyptian reaction to the Entente, we find that the majority of the nationalist movement rallied behind Mostafa Kamel and his appeal to the Ottoman authorities to press for the preservation of their *historical rights in Egypt*. *Al-Ahram*, however, saw greater hope in launching a broader international appeal. It noted that for the agreement to take effect it required the approval of other international powers. Analysing the international situation in the wake of the agreement, it observed that "since France, which had been the major obstacle, has given its approval, it appears that all other obstacles have been removed. Russia has always followed the French lead on the Egyptian question and Italy is the friend of both England and France and will not attempt to stand in the way, even if its interests in Egypt are great due to the large Italian community in this country. There only remains Germany for whom the agreement comes as a slap in the face."

The newspaper pauses to consider the German factor.

Over the following weeks, *Al-Ahram* kept a keen eye on the developments on the German front. They were not encouraging. At the end of April, the German chancellor announced, "We do not perceive the slightest reason to consider that the Anglo-French *accord is directed against the interests of* any nation. Rather, through this entente these two nations have been able to resolve many matters that had formerly provoked differences between them." Moreover, he stated that the German government had no cause to object to the agreement, "because it is our desire that good relations prevail between the two countries since discord between them threatens the general peace and welfare which it is our deepest wish to preserve and protect."

Al-Ahram was deeply dismayed by the speech which reflected a policy that it considered to be in poor judgement. Had it known that negotiations were currently underway between London and Berlin over a similar agreement it would have had greater cause for disappointment. This agreement, which was ratified approximately two months later, stipulated that "Germany accepts not to object to the British action in Egypt whether by demanding a specific deadline to end its occupation or in any other manner." In return, Britain offered guarantees similar to those it had given France. It granted Germany commercial freedom in Egypt; the British government would honour German rights in Egypt in accordance with international covenants; German schools would continue to operate freely; German government employees would be treated equally to their British counterparts.



The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

Backing development in Upper Egypt

A CANADIAN grant worth $9 million was allocated for 660 small-scale projects set up by the Social Development Fund in Upper Egypt, Zeinab Mahmoud, Training Department manager at the Canadian Development Agency, stated.

Omar Khalafalla, representative of the agency in Sohag Governorate, said that these grants are provided for technical training purposes and will be directed towards ventures in Sohag, Qena and Beni Suef governorates.

Ahmed Abdel-Aziz Bakr, governor of Sohag, explained that one of the projects will be a fertiliser factory to be built west of Sohag.





Money & Business

Egypt after two centuries

THE CENTRE for Middle Eastern Studies at Ain Shams University, in cooperation with the Ferid Rish-Neuman Organisation and *Al-Ahram Al-Iqtisadi*, will organise a symposium dealing with Egypt in the next two centuries. The symposium will focus on the economic changes which are expected to take place in Egypt during the next two hundred years, in light of various factors and influences, both external and internal.

Dr Reda Ali, head of the centre and dean of the Faculty of Commerce at Ain Shams University, said that the symposium will be held from 20-22 February.

Inmarsat-3 F3 bringing global coverage

PERSONAL mobile satellite phone service became available recently for all those who do business, live or venture off the beaten track in the Pacific Ocean region.

The third satellite in the Inmarsat-3 series, the world's most advanced communications spacecraft, entered service on Saturday, 25 January at 17.00 GMT.

Inmarsat-3 F3 joins two other similar satellites already in operation, extending to about 95 per cent of the world's land-mass the benefit of the new personal Inmarsat-phone service. The spacecraft also boosts the capacity of Inmarsat's other commercial maritime, aeronautical and land-mobile communications systems.

Inmarsat's third generation will eventually comprise five satellites. The final two in the constellation will lift-off this year on Ariane IV rockets from Kourou, French Guiana.

Inmarsat-3 satellites are eight times more powerful than Inmarsat-2 and feature spot beam technology which enables them to focus this power on areas where traffic demand is greatest. This satellite power allows the operation of small, light satellite phones. The Inmarsat-phone system supports a range of satellite mobile phones — offering voice, 2.4kbit/s data and fax services — weighing from 2.2kg and smaller than most laptop computers.

The Inmarsat-3 F3 satellite, launched aboard an Atlas IIA rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida on 18 December, has taken over traffic from Inmarsat's previous generation Pacific Ocean region satellite, Inmarsat-2 F3, which now becomes a system backup.

On Saturday Inmarsat's Network Operations Centre in London directed each of the ten land earth stations operated by telecommunications service providers in the Pacific Ocean region to steer their antennas away from the Inmarsat-2 satellite and towards the new Inmarsat-3. Land earth stations at Santa Paula, USA; Perth, Australia and Yamaguchi, Japan, led the transition. Each land earth station acts as a gateway between the Inmarsat satellites and the terrestrial communications network.

Environmental conference to take place

THE ARAB world, the Middle East and North Africa will witness the most important environmental event as the International Conference for Environmental Technology and Management convenes at the Cairo International Conference Centre from 16-18 February 1997.

Accompanying the conference will be an international exhibition under the supervision of Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri.

Selah Hafez, head of the Environmental Affairs Council, said that the aim of the exhibition is to act as a forum for the exchange of ideas related to global environment, as well as display the latest technology related to environmental management and conservation. Visitors and exhibitors from the Middle East and North Africa, comprised of industrialists and those working in environment-related fields, will benefit from the exhibition, as many opportunities for networking and interaction with the aim of fostering future relations will abound.

International Hardware Fair to be held in Cologne, Germany

THE INTERNATIONAL Hardware Fair, held along with the Builders' and DIY Supplies Trade Fair, is considered one of the biggest international fairs specialised in this field, with more than 3,500 exhibitors from 55 countries attending. The fair to be held from 2-5 March in Cologne, Germany, will occupy a space of 275 thousand square metres and is expected to receive 95 thousand attendees from 115 countries.

The fair will naturally be of interest to those operating in the retail end of the hardware and DIY field, with all kinds of tools and equipment from among the world's most well-known manufacturers found under one roof.

Among the most important countries participating in the exhibition this year are Italy, with 360 companies; Taiwan, with 230; the United States, 200; France, 180; England, 165; China, 135; Holland and Spain, 120; India, 75; Austria, 45 and Switzerland, 40.

Exhibitors will be grouped into 3 divisions: World Tools Centre, with hand, machine and electric tools; Security Systems Locks and Fittings; and Builders' and DIY Supplies.

Business news

The future of the tanning industry

THE CHAMBER of Leather Tanning, headed by Mamdouh Thabit Mekki, under-secretary of the Federation of Egyptian Industries is convening its general assembly which will discuss the future vision of the tanning industry, represented by requesting to remove additional obstacles which hinder means of modernising and upgrading the specifications of tanned leather.

Companies' law reviewed

THE EGYPTIAN cabinet recently discussed the final draft of the companies' law. Atef Ebeid, minister of the public business sector, stated that the draft law has been prepared by two ministerial groups with the participation of many economists and experts.

Ebeid added that the procedures of the new law will be simple in regards to establishing companies and will organise a workers' quota for company profits.

Chinese grant to establish electric station

THE CHINESE government will grant the Electricity Sector a US$3.5 million non-refundable grant to establish a hydro-electric power generating station in the Hawara area of Fayoum Governorate, said Minister of Electricity and Energy Maher Abaza. The new station will provide nearly 4.5 million kilowatts of ordinary energy annually.


Tallying finds in the Valley of the Kings, 1990

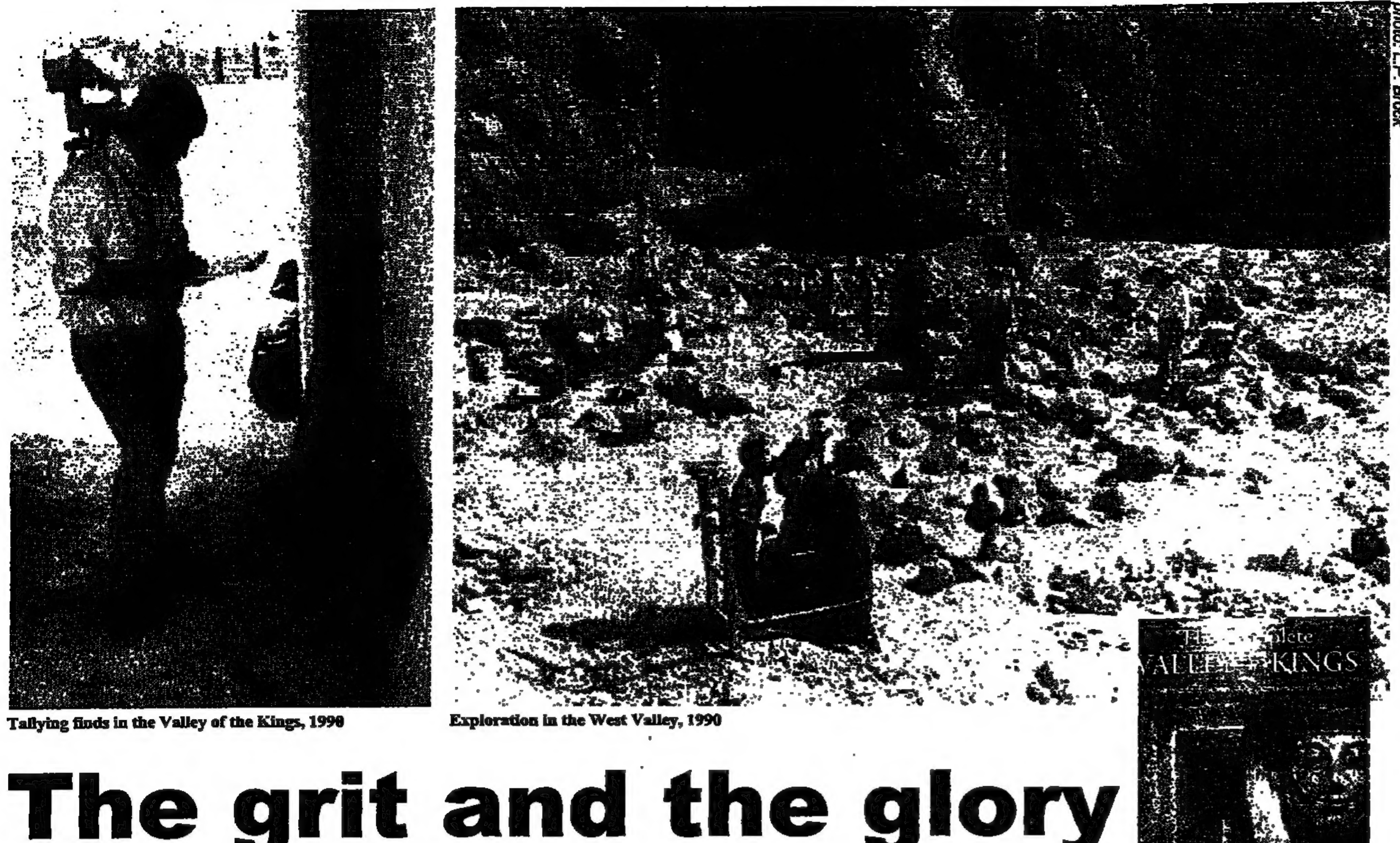

Exploration in the West Valley, 1990

photo: L.P. Brock

The grit and the glory

A recently released book chronicles new discoveries and excavations in Egypt's famous royal necropolis. **Lyla Pinch Brock** assesses the book's contribution to the field and describes work in progress

Internet between covers

The Complete Valley of the Kings by Nicolas Reeves, an ancient art consultant now curator of the Carnarvon collection, and art historian Richard H. Wilkinson, who hosted the second Valley of the Kings Conference in the US in 1994, is the most recent of many attempts to present the history and development of the Valley of the Kings to a general audience. Now available on the Egyptian market, it is vastly different from its forebears in both style and presentation.

'*Kings*' is, in fact, an Internet between covers. The format indulges a generation brought up with television, chronically afflicted with a short attention span and a thirst for "entertainment." The copy is colour-blocked and broken into bytes and bits, its 224 pages split up with sidebars, subheads and snippets, splashed with graphics, reconstructions, illustrations and close-cropped photos. It is an edible book, delicious to dip into anytime for the latest update on this or that tomb.

Published by Thames and Hudson, and distributed by the American University in Cairo Press in time for the tourist season, *Kings* is definitely an absorbing cruise-book read. If sampled before sauntering off to see the 'real thing,' it provides enough ammunition to 'one-up' the guide at the appropriate moment.

To fully appreciate the importance of this book, a little background is necessary. Until six years ago, when three "Valley" books popped into print, there was no popular, informative book on this site. In 1966 Princeton did a limited publication of *The Theban Necropoleis*, Elizabeth Thomas' life work. Thomas braved snakes and scorpions to investigate every pit and shaft-tomb in the area, and supplemented this work with repeated forays to the Griffith Institute and the British Library to read the accounts of early travellers. It is a work of genuine scholarship, including details of the experiences of early explorers, from which others still borrow heavily.

Then in 1990, John Romer's *Valley of the Kings* was published, emphasising those same explorers; Eric Hornung's *The Valley of the Kings — Horizon of Eternity* focused on decoration of the tombs and its significance; and Nicholas Reeves' doctoral thesis covered, *Valley of the Kings, The Decline of a Royal Necropolis*. In 1988 he edited the papers from the conference, *After Tutankhamun — Research and Excavation in the Royal Necropolis at Thebes*, sponsored by the fifth Earl of Carnarvon.

While *Kings* is none of the above, it is — in effect — all of them, with the bonus of being much more readable and accessible. True to its intent to be 'complete,' it contains many new, old and unpublished photos and the results of current excavation work, thus supplying the glamour that Reeves' typewritten thesis lacked.

Logically, *Kings* begins at the very beginning, with the geology of the Valley, the cutting of the tombs, their decoration and inherent symbolism, the sarcophagus and provisions for the afterlife. The next section, "Agents of Discovery," goes into the grit and glory of discovery by savants and archaeologists.

The book finishes with descriptions of the 'caches' of mummies from Deir El-Bahri and the Tomb of Amenhotep II, accompanied by grizzly photographs.

While most of the photographs are admirable, a few are puzzling and off-colour; the decorated sarcophagus of Ay (page 128) is singularly unrevealing, and Maiherpri (page 179) seems over-large.

Fewer than 100 pages are devoted to the actual tombs, but each provides a small plan and a "fact-file" listing further references to consult. This is supplemented by an extensive "further reading" section at the back.

"*Valley of the Kings*" is a bit of a misnomer, since there are actually two valleys: one to the east, designated KV (King's Valley), and one to the west, designated WV (West Valley). The epilogue contains a summary of recent archaeology and epigraphy in both, otherwise detailed in the body of the book.

As a guidebook for visitors to the Valley, *Kings* is less successful. In "Visiting the Royal Valley," the authors skip the whole subject of how to get there, and many other things they mention on this single page such as ticketing, photographing regulations and tourism, all fluctuate. The number systems used on the map on page 11, although quite valid, in print are a bit boggling. The map also lacks a point of orientation — the new rest-house, for instance, would help visitors locate the West Valley.

Available from The American University in Cairo Press and all major bookstores: LE 150 (hardcover), LE75 (paperback).

Work in the valley

It is a little-known fact that few tombs in the Valley of the Kings have actually been cleared, studied and documented. In the past two decades, only a handful of scholars have braved the assault on health and pocketbook to do so.

Kent Weeks has probably done more single-handedly to revive interest (and tourism) in the Valley of the Kings than anyone since Howard Carter. His exploration of the tomb now known as the Sons of Ramses II (KV5) is continuously producing surprises; the published layout will already have to undergo alteration.

Just across the tourist path, the tomb of the "great chiseller" Ramses II himself, is being explored by a French mission under the direction of Christian Le Blanc. The two tombs have a great deal in common. Le Blanc recently found the same Osiris figure carved in high relief as Weeks did in KV5. Unfortunately, they both have also suffered repeated flooding, eroding the particularly fine reliefs.

In the 1970s, Otto Schaden excavated the tombs of Ay and WV25 in the West Valley, before turning to the little-known Amenmesse in the East Valley, and eventually determining its extent. Also in the West Valley, Jiro Kondo and his Wasenda team have been cleaning and conserving the Tomb of Amenhotep III and the storeroom called WVA.

In the late 1980s, Donald P. Ryan began to clear and conserve the small shaft-tombs in the wadi behind KV5. In 1989, John Rose cleared debris from KV39 and found the layout a complete surprise. Further investigation has been forestalled by his ill-health. By 1995, Hartwig Altenmueller had cleared the Tomb of Chancellor Bay and was rewarded with two new sarcophagi; Edwin C. Brock turned up a number of hitherto unknown sarcophagi of Merenptah from clearances; and L.P. Brock proved that there is a great deal to be discovered in unexplored tombs like KV55.

In 1910 the wealthy dilettante archaeologist Theodore Davis announced "The valley is exhausted," and gave over his concession to Lord Carnarvon. Continuous exploration proves time and again that the end is not in sight. *The Complete Valley of the Kings* will never be the "definitive account" the publisher aimed for, but for now it will do just fine.

How to get there

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurghada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria
Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter.
A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.15am. Tickets from Almaza LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Marsa Matrouh
Services at 7am departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE36
Cairo-Sidi Abdel-Rahman
Services at 6.30am, 7am, 8am, 9am and 3.45pm. Tickets LE32
Cairo-Port Said
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said
Service 6.45am, from Ramleh Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurghada
Service 8pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North/South Sinai Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qulali (near Ramsis Square), Almaza and Tagnid Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbassiya Square. Tel. 482-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia
Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-Suez
Services every half hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish
Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qulali, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nuweiba
Service 8am, from Abbassiya, then Almaza. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus Company

Stations at Tahrir and Almaza. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurghada
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10.30pm, 10.45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safaga
Services 9am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Qusseir
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramsis Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3555.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 7.40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6.40 am and 8am, Aswan 8.40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians, to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.
"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers
Services to Luxor and Aswan 6.45pm, 8.45pm and 9.45pm. Tickets to Luxor: first class LE51; second class LE31. Tickets to Aswan: first class LE63; second class LE37.

Cairo-Alexandria
"Torbini" trains
VIP train: Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal.
Standard trains: Services 9am, 11am, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22; second class LE17.
"French" trains
Services hourly from 6am to 10.30pm. Tickets first class LE20; second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said
Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45; second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily. Check EgyptAir: Adly 390-0999; Opera 390-2444; or Hilton 772410

Cairo-Aswan
Tickets LE351 for Egyptians, LE1143 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Luxor
Tickets LE259 for Egyptians, LE829 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurghada
Tickets LE279 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh
Tickets LE287 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**

Rebirth of a Coptic robe

A sixth century Coptic robe has now been restored, using a new technique developed by an Egyptian restorer, and is on display at the Coptic Museum. **Sherine Nasr** reports

A badly-wrapped parcel, discovered in the stores of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), was found to contain a sixth century linen robe fitted with ornaments. Its condition was deplorable. Restored by a time-consuming new method, the robe has been returned to its original condition. At the museum, a chemically-treated polystyrene mannequin provides the perfect display for the exquisite, restored robe.

Present techniques for conserving and restoring ancient textiles are now facing fundamental changes since an Egyptian restorer came up with a new, innovative procedure.

"In the past, changes were implemented directly on the object being restored. The process was sometimes extremely detrimental to the article, if not disastrous," said Mahmoud Mursi, a professor in the Textile Department of the Faculty of Applied Art at Cairo University.

Textile restoration, he claimed, was previously judged by the immediate effect it had on the textile, "but restorers were not concerned about what would become of the newly-restored fabric after the passage of time. They lacked the means to determine the long-term effect of the restoration chemicals on the cloth."

Mursi explained that the chemicals tended to interact with the original material causing more damage in the long run. Another method was to stick new cloth to the original to reinforce it, "but this was equally damaging because in time the cloth used for backing would 'eat up' the original material and the piece would be permanently destroyed."

The new technique, based on 'accelerated aging,' takes a piece of cloth identical to the original and makes it old and fragile. It is then introduced to a new chemical formula to gauge its reaction before being used on the textile to be restored.

The white Coptic robe was chosen as a model on which to apply the new technique. "The robe was dug up in the 1930s," said Mursi, "and it was clear, from the silken thread used to attach the ornaments, that it was a sixth century Coptic piece."

Like mummies, textiles are vulnerable to decay. "Aside from air pollution, humidity and sunlight, there are other factors, such as moths and bacteria, that can destroy the fiber," Mursi said. The piece in question was affected by a combination of all these factors. "It was dry and fragile, and the colour of the ornaments had faded. There were stains, holes and the silk threads used for embellishment had become rusty," he explaified.

One of the difficulties faced in restoring ancient textiles is how to handle the dyes efficiently. "The technique was developed in the time of the Pharaohs, who used natural colour extracted from plants and crushed stone," said Professor Mursi. "We have to use similar formulas because chemically treated dyes could later interact adversely with the original fibre."

The first step toward restoring the robe was to identify the material from which it was made. "Each kind of cloth must be treated specially. This one was made of pure linen and we had some difficulty finding the same material on the local market."

When found, an identical robe was made and the new 'accelerated aging' technique was applied. "The model robe was exposed to an artificial light which mimics the effect of the sun," said Mursi, who explained that studies have shown that a 100-year-old object is exposed to approximately 500 hours of sunshine. The new technique makes it possible to attain the same result in a very short time. In other words, the new fabric in effect becomes 100-years-old when exposed to artificial light for 20 days.

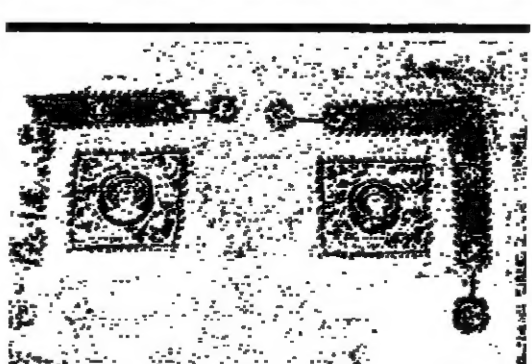
The aging technique was applied gradually. "Each time, we had to examine the new cloth to determine how fragile the fiber had become," he said.

When the robe had become adequately fragile, the chemical treatment began. "The chemicals used are internationally recognised, but a new ratio was experimented with for the first time by a young Egyptian restorer," said Mursi.

The aging was then resumed to determine potential biological or chemical interaction which might occur in the next 100 years. "The results were incredible. The new formula did not effect the robe chemically, and it should remain in its restored state for several decades, at least," exclaimed Mursi.

Once the experimental robe was successfully restored, the same technique was applied to the original. "The results were equally fantastic," Mursi explained, adding that the new technique will make it possible for experts to apply new restoration methods to copies of originals rather than directly on the pieces themselves, thereby observing their long-term effects without ruining ancient textiles.

"The original textile is far too precious and unique to lose to inadequate restoration techniques," he said.



Desperate tunics

THE COPTIC Museum has the largest collection of Coptic tapestries in the world. The decorative border of this tunic is in an excellent state of preservation, protected by the warm, dry desert sand of the burial ground in Middle Egypt where it was found. In the storerooms of the museum, however, are countless other pieces in desperate need of restoration.

Friendly tourism

IN AN attempt to promote environmentally-friendly tourism in the Red Sea, USAID agreed to fund the placement of 250 mooring buoys. The Hurghada Environmental Preservation and Conservation Association (HEPCA) will oversee their installation and maintenance in Hurghada, Safaga and Qusseir. Further support has been provided by USAID in the form of a work boat and four-wheel-drive vehicle with which to transport the necessary equipment.

The divers responsible for the installation and maintenance of the buoys have completed the required training and begun installation of the moorings. Boat captains have been instructed on how to use the new moorings properly.

HEPCA will also launch an environmental awareness campaign targeting hotel staff, tour operators, dive centres, boat captains, fishermen and the local community. In addition to stressing the importance of protecting the reefs and marine life, the campaign will introduce new environmental regulations.

There are almost 750 boats that provide access to offshore islands in the Hurghada area. Previously they dropped anchor on the fragile coral reefs, causing severe damage to the fragile marine ecosystem — particularly in Giftun, Abu Ramada and Magawish. The mooring project aims to protect these endangered areas.

A new city

THE ISMAILIA Governorate has allocated 10,000 feddans on which to establish what they hope will be the largest tourist city along the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. The project, an Egyptian-Kuwaiti venture, will cost $600 million and will be carried out in phases beginning next April.

The city will include five-star hotels, chalets, marinas, a service compound and an artificial lake. "The city will help promote transit tourism to other canal cities, particularly when the flyover between the two banks is completed," said Rafaat Abdel-Azem, the project supervisor.

Mummy cured

THE PERMANENT Committee of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) has agreed to send "the Dendera mummy," one of the oldest Egyptian mummies, to be treated in the Biological Museum in London.

A committee of Egyptian experts has been formed to study the present condition of the mummy in order to make a scientific documentation of it before it travels. The mummy was discovered in El-Tramesa village, north of Luxor, by the Belgium Archaeological mission in 1992.

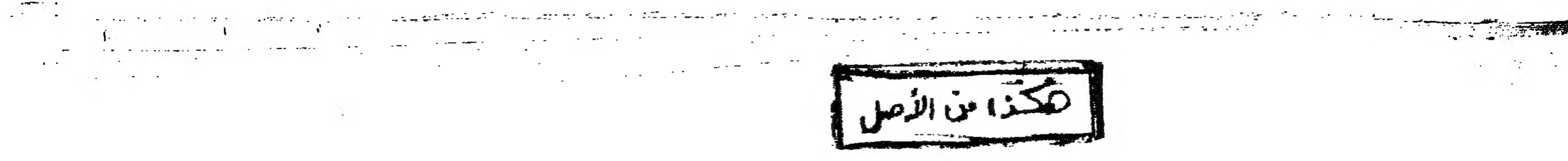
Graeco-Roman statue

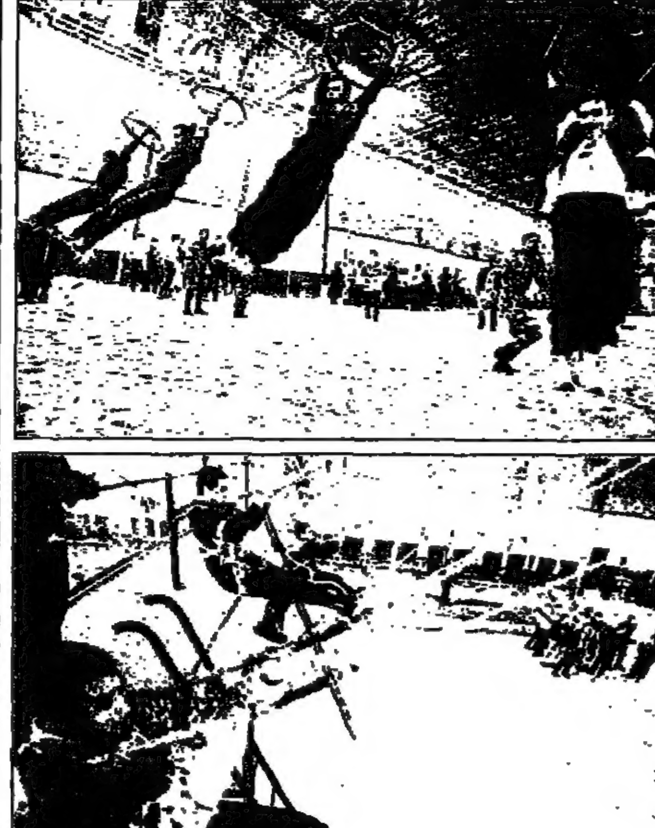
THE STATUE of a child, considered a masterpiece of Graeco-Roman sculpture, was accidentally discovered by a fisherman at the north end of Borolos Lake, almost 2km from the Mediterranean coast.

The marble statue depicts a young boy who has fallen asleep with his head resting on his left hand. Stylistic treatment of the hair and gown date the statue to the time of Emperor Augustus.

The fisherman described the area where he found the statue as shallow, rocky and generally avoided by ships. He added that he once found a "huge stone" which he also thought was ancient, "but I threw it into the water after it damaged my net."

A report by the SCA stated that the site where the discoveries were made was probably a Graeco-Roman settlement.



Photos capturing several phases of parachuting: the 210-feet-tower jump, training at the swings and other floor equipments to practise their descend and landing, and finally a paraglider attempt photos: Salah Ibrahim

Reaching higher

The ranks of those going to ever greater heights grew larger in the heady environs of a 210-foot tower top. **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** enjoys the atmosphere

Even while fasting during Ramadan, a true parachutist could never say 'no' to a jump. A parachutist by temperament searches for adventure to break the routine of life. Anything to feel alive. Last week, 100 parachutists-in-training, from El-Shams, Galaa, Gezira and Sharqia clubs, leapt from the 210-foot tower.

The parachutists, aged above 16-years, are eagerly awaiting the chance to jump from aircraft at a height of 800m. But, since aeroplanes were unavailable, the Egyptian Sport Parachuting and Aeronautic Federation (ESPAF) decided to add a final self test before the big leap.

"It's an in-between jump," said General Ismail Darwish, a member of the ESPAF, "where we can judge a parachutist in his descent and landing because jumping from an aircraft doesn't allow the chance to see the exact moment the parachutist reaches the ground."

The metal tower has four arms, each of which is like a crane that lifts the open parachute and jumper. The tower's arms are controlled from inside a control room by experts who are themselves parachutists. Built in 1985, the tower is one of only three the world over and is the only one in the Middle East.

The jump last week marked the first time civilians were allowed to use the facility. "We thought about using the tower since jumping opportunities from aeroplanes are rare and very expensive," said Major Mohamed El-Tereifi, secretary-general of the ESPAF.

The tower jump, officials stress, is not for enjoyment, but for the serious assessment of the parachutist involved. Still, it is, despite the lack of an aircraft, considered a full jump. The trainee first waits, wearing his open parachute on the ground, until the crane lifts him over 200 feet in the air. The men in the control room then, upon receiving the green light from the instructor on the ground, release him to float gently to terra firma.

The training courses encompass all the possible difficulties parachutists are likely to face during jumps. The conditions are duplicated on the ground using structural equipment. "The training is divided into three parts," says Captain Abdel-Karim Ali, parachuting coach at Galaa Club, "Exit out of the aeroplane door, descent with the parachute and reaching the ground. These training exercises usually end with practical training which represent these stages individually." When the parachutist passes all these stages successfully (lasting for 20 days of training), they become qualified to jump from aeroplanes to practise.

15 parachutists joined the ranks of Egyptians, now numbering 50, who have practised paragliding since 1994. Using an airlift type of parachute, their training differed from that of regular parachuting enthusiasts. The training lasts for 10 days during which the trainee familiarises himself with the parachute and its layout. The trainee then learns the correct way of wearing the equipment before he is made to drag it along the ground with direction from the instructor. For safety, the coach attaches a rope to the paraglider to a height of 50 to 70 metres to train him to glide under observation. The final step entails learning to use a 20kg two-stroke motor and a fan 120cm long to take off and land. The paraglider can glide up to 10km an hour at a height of 10,000 feet. The experienced glider can achieve greater heights by riding the upcurrent. While in training the paragliders are limited to 10 minutes of gliding time.

The sport, under the auspices of the ESPAF and supported by the Egyptian Armed Forces and the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports (SCYS), is for the well-heeled. Egyptians can expect to pay 50 pounds per jump whereas foreigners are hit with a hefty $40 bill, provided they have a licence. If not, the mandatory training fee is $500.

Parachuting has an appeal for people of all ages, Dr Osama Shidid, a sport psychiatrist at the SCYS, completed his first jump at the age of 50. "Parachuting is a kind of sport that people are afraid of practising. On the other hand, why do some people, especially youth, go on practising it," Shidid said. "It's when you're at the edge of fear, you get to know yourself, your abilities. You discover that if you did something fearful like parachuting, you can do anything else. I'm here now because I want to know myself. I want to feel what the theories say practically." Mohamed Ahmed Hammad, an ambassador, encourages his son Rami to enjoy the sport. "It's a means of using the time of youth in useful sports," said Hammad. "They learn how to be organised, meticulous and become disciplined."

In ground training or in the aeroplane, you can't differentiate between a young man and a middle aged one. All look the same. All want to jump. All have their own motives. All can do it.

Back to school

How can sport be revived in schools? Sports and educational experts got together to discuss plans for the future. **Abeer Anwar** reports

Schools should be a breeding ground for top sports men and women of the future. But with many schools lacking space and facilities, and students under increasing pressure to study hard for examinations, sport has more often than not taken a back seat on the curriculum. It was in an effort to change this situation that Minister of Education Hussein Kamel Bahaeddin met with Mounir Thabet, head of the National Olympic Committee, along with other sports experts.

"The renewal of sports in Egypt can only happen in the schools," asserted Mosaad Ewess, the meeting organiser. "All sports organisations should work together to discover talent at an early age."

Minister Bahaeddin agreed. "Improving sports in schools is the only way to develop sports in Egypt and discover young people who might have the nucleus of a champion inside them," he said.

Hamed El-Deeb, under-secretary at the Ministry of Education, assured that the ministry would put its weight behind the *revival of sports* in schools. The first step taken has been to increase the mark that students can gain for sporting excellence, which is included in final high school qualifications. From this year onwards, *thanaweya amma* and technical diploma students will be awarded 16 marks for winning first place in national championships, 20 marks for first place in Arab championships, 32 for African and Mediterranean championships, and 40 for international and world championships.

Bahaeddin has also authorised the immediate construction of eight indoor halls in various governorates at a cost of LE2 million, their exact location to be decided by a *joint* committee of the National Olympic Committee and the Ministry of Education.

Another joint committee has been set up to design a national plan to develop sports in schools, including the training and re-training of physical education teachers, and special training for talented students to prepare them to take part in international events.

Furthermore, in an effort to encourage students to play sports, theoretical sports knowledge and the history of the Egyptian Olympic movement will feature on the school curriculum starting next year. Sports federations will also play their part. They will supervise all inter-school leagues and competitions throughout Egypt. And better use will be made of those schools lucky enough to have playing fields and sports courts. These facilities will be made available throughout the year, like a club, enabling students to train and practise in the holidays.

The result of all these efforts, the organisers hope, will be a return to what they view as a golden age of Egyptian sport, when young men and women came out of the schools to achieve sporting greatness. "Nowadays, Egypt has *30,000* schools with *15 million* students," remarked the National Olympic Committee's Thabet. "If we have one talented player in each school, that's enough to make up a number of strong national teams in the various sports. This would allow Egypt to participate in different events and stake a larger claim on the international sports map."

In the air

With each team having played two matches, the outcome of the African qualifications for the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France is proving unpredictable. **Eric Asomugha** reports

There has been a far from encouraging reversal of fortune for some of the top-rated African teams in the ongoing African qualifications matches for the 1998 FIFA World Cup to be held in France. The underdogs penchant for snatching valuable points continues to undermine fan favourites like Nigeria's Super Eagles as contenders for a World Cup ticket.

The Super Eagles, much to the chagrin of supporters, are presently second behind Guinea in Group I with 4 points. But analysts in Nigeria, taking the optimistic partisan approach, remain convinced of the country's chances of winning a place in the World Cup. The star-studded Atlanta Olympic champion team has so far defeated Burkina Faso 2-0 in Lagos and forced Kenya to an away 1-1 draw. Guinea, meanwhile, utilising its home advantage to the full, nabbed the Group I lead after winning matches against Kenya 3-1 and Burkina Faso 2-0.

Group II member, Egypt, fielding an accomplished team of veterans including goalkeeper Ahmed Shobeir and the Hassan brothers, Hossam and Ibrahim, trashed Namibia 7-1 in Cairo. The overwhelming victory was achieved under the tutelage of coach Farouk Gafaar, replacing Dutchman Ruudi Kroll. An away 1-0 loss to Tunisia leaves Egypt's future, with only three points on the table, up in the air. Tunisia, with home and away victories, leads Group II with six points.

Zambia, which ironically is the highest placed African team in FIFA's ranking, is sinking fast after colliding with Congo in Group III. The Central African team bested Zambia 0-1 in Pointe-Noire, bumping the listing ship to a third place berth following their failure to clinch sorely needed points in a disappointing goalless draw with South Africa. Congo took the lead ahead of South Africa on goal differences despite their tie of four points each.

Current African leader South Africa's search for a World Cup place may be endangered by the possible loss of Sean Dundee to Germany. The South African, who bears an Irish first name and a Scottish surname and is nicknamed "Crocodile" after a certain film character, may soon be eligible to play for Germany. German coach Berti Vogts is reportedly working tirelessly to get Dundee naturalised in time for the Germany-Northern Ireland World Cup qualifier in November.

The main battle in Group IV raged between Angola and Cameroon with four points each. The Francophone team defeated Togo 4-2 away, but surprisingly played a goalless draw with Angola at Douala. The two rivals will have to wait for their second-leg encounter — provided defeat isn't conceded before then — at Luanda in June to ascertain the group winner.

Morocco, with four points, leads in Group V ahead of Sierra Leone. Ghana, another of the continent's recognised football powers, meanwhile, is trailing by two points with one home 2-2 draw with Morocco and an away 1-1 draw with Gabon.

In April, the third matches of each group will be decided in various cities as Nigeria hosts *Guinea* before their second-leg showdown in August at Conakry and Bafana Bafana of South Africa attempts to settle scores with Congo at Pointe-Noire. Cameroon is scheduled to confront Zimbabwe at home while *Sierra Leone*, a replacement for Burundi, takes on *Ghana* in Freetown.

Gentleman rising

Omar El-Borollossy has long been overshadowed by his compatriots in his sport. But today the squash star is blazing a trail all of his own. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** reports



Borollossy (*right*) in World Squash Championship photo: Salah Ibrahim

Omar El-Borollossy has come a long way from his early years as an unknown amateur player to his current status as a well-known professional, juggling training and championships with his university studies. Well-known for his perseverance, it is this quality which is reckoned to have earned him a recent world ranking of 28, while at the same time pursuing demanding engineering studies at AUC.

There is one thing that stands out about Borollossy over and above his professional skill. *Despite the pressure* that he must often be under, he never loses his temper on court; he is never anything less than polite whatever the provocation. This quality led official *squash presenter Robert* Edward to dub him 'the gentleman'.

Brollosy's sporting career began at the age of six when, along with his friends, he took up swimming at the Maadi Sporting and Yacht Club. After swimming training he would often go along to the squash courts to watch his uncle play. He soon took up the game himself, taking part in both the squash and swimming national championships at the age of 11. Rather to his surprise, he took fourth place in swimming, but dominated the under-12 section of the squash competition.

"That is when I decided to take squash seriously and give up swimming," recalled Borollossy.

His uncle, Hisham *El-Borollossy* saw a promising young player in his nephew, and encouraged him to move to the Gezira Sporting Club. The change to the new club, which has better squash coaching and facilities, proved beneficial and his victories went on and on. "It seems I became addicted to winning after the under-12s. I went on to win the nationals in the other age groups," Borollossy said.

The young athlete made his international debut at the Arab Championships in Qatar in 1989, where he nabbed the under-16 title. He went on to win the European Grand Prix in 1992-3 (a series of tournaments which takes place in different countries over a seven month period after which each player's points are added up for a European rank). Borollossy then won the European Grand Prix for the following season.

Borollossy led his team, including Ahmed Barada and Ahmed Faizy, to win the 1994 World Junior Cup. He won second place in the individual event after Barada. "I *think the golden age squash is witnessing now* in Egypt is due to our accomplishment," Borollossy said, adding, "It was after this that squash became a popular sport in Egypt and the Egyptians realised that they have world champions in the game."

During that time Borollossy had just completed high school and was hesitant to make the decision whether to give up squash in order to excel in college or not. "After the achievements my team and I made in that championship, I made up my mind to try my best to excel in both," he said.

Being captain of the Egyptian team that won first place in the World Junior Cup three years ago and winning second place in the same championship, has whetted El-Borollossy's appetite for more trophies. Unlike his teammates, his record is short of British Junior Open accomplishments. This may be partly due to the fact his studies don't allow him the chance to keep up the pace to better his world rank. His first year in university kept *him distracted and his ranking hovered at 80.*

Last year Borollossy impressed everyone with his strong comeback into the circuit to rise to rank 45. By January of this year, he was ranked 28th, but the improvement came at the expense of his studies as Borollossy withdrew for two semesters. In 1996, Borollossy led his mixed team, comprised of Salma Shabana and Barada, to victory in the World Mixed Cup in Malaysia over the 24 participants.

There is no rest for the weary in squash. Borollossy's dream is to reach the top 10 and that is where his concentration lies. His daily routine starts at 6.30am when he slots in his physical fitness training before going to university. As soon as he finishes his school day, his squash training at the Gezira Club, lasting three hours, commences. To round out the day, when he at last reaches home at about 8.00 or 9.00pm, Borollossy sits down to work on his school project.

His strict adherence to his self-imposed regimen *appears to be paying off, Borollossy* recently won the Greenwich Rolex Open in the USA, and the 'gentleman' continues to work out a compromise between his studies and his favourite sport.

Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

Seeing red

PROFESSIONAL cyclists will undergo blood *tests this year to determine* whether they have excessive levels of red blood cells in their system.

The International Cycling Union (ICU) adopted the measure following allegations that many riders are using EPO, a banned performance-enhancing drug that boosts the production of red blood cells.

Out sick

STEFFI Graf pulled out at the last minute of a long-awaited showdown with Martina Hingis. Graf cited increasing problems with her left knee for her decision not to take on the 16-year-old Swiss star in the final of the Toray Pan Pacific Open.

Hingis, the youngest Grand Slam winner this century, could only comment that she was relieved because she also felt unwell.

Best ever

MORE than 2,000 athletes are expected in Toronto for the Olympic Winter Games. Organisers say the games are set to be the largest international multi-sport event of 1997.

After the opening ceremonies, mentally disabled athletes from 80 nations will compete in five main categories; alpine skiing, speed skating, floor hockey, cross-country skiing and figure skating, plus demonstration sport snowshoeing.

Twist and shout

OLYMPIC champion Fabrice Becker, won the men's acrobatics title at the World Freestyle Ski Championships. The 25-year-old Frenchman, the runner-up at the 1995 championships at La Clusaz, France, scored the most points in both the artistic expression and technical merit categories for a total of 26.90 points.

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Mahmoud El-Imam:

A will and a way

An inveterate Nasserist, he knows that there is no such thing as an apolitical technocrat

photo: Ayman El-Kharrat

Mohamed Mahmoud El-Imam, a former minister of planning, does not live in decent anonymity. A sprightly septuagenarian, he has no time for retirement. The computer in his study, in his apartment on the busy Nasr City thoroughfare of Abbas El-Aqqad Street, is buried underneath heaps of books and papers. He never learnt to touch-type, but he churns out booklets and articles by the dozen. He was leafing through his latest, *The Arab Common Market in Light of Regional and International Vicissitudes*, at the close of a three-hour interview. "I typed the 200 pages with two fingers. I did it all on my computer," he chuckled. "Down to the cover design."

El-Imam is a columnist with the weekly *Al-Arabi*, an official organ of the opposition Arab Democratic Nasserist Party. He is a prolific writer whose articles are published in numerous Arab papers. He is also something of a jet-setting conference-goer. When I first met him, he had just returned from the European Union-sponsored Mediterranean Conference on Population, Migration and Development, held from 15 to 17 October 1996 in the resort city of Palma on the Spanish island of Majorca. The paper he presented there was critical of the proposed European partnership with Arab Mediterranean countries. It was entitled *New Strategies for Development Cooperation*.

"Our problem is that our resources, material and human, are not developed to the full. The very first computer in Egypt, an ancient IBM, was first installed in the planning department where I was working in 1960. Egypt was the first country outside Europe to have a railway system. What have we done with our early start?" He winces at the thought.

"I started out as an anti-Nasserist. As a youngster I was in awe of the monarchy. Mohamed Ali Pasha was the first modern Egyptian ruler to institute radical development projects. He wanted to modernise Egypt. I won a scholarship to study in England, in much the same tradition of sending Egyptians to Europe that was started by Mohamed Ali two centuries ago. I returned to Egypt for a holiday in 1952. I won a prize — a signed photo of King Farouk — for academic distinction. I received the prize on 23 July, knowing nothing of Gamal Abdel-Nasser's revolution," he says, perhaps amused at the irony.

"These days, many people purport to be Nasserists," El-Imam says, shaking his head disapprovingly. So, what marks him out from the herd? "Under Nasser's orders, I translated the liberal economics classic, Walter Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth*," El-Imam remembers. An economics major myself, my heart sank as I remembered my least favourite textbook — the one that put me off economics for life. El-Imam gives me a knowing nod, adding quickly: "Now, Nasser was no advocate of neo-classical economics. He was no economist, but he thirsted and hungered for knowledge. He felt that such a standard classic textbook should be made available to students and the wider public in Egypt."

El-Imam is a technical expert, but he understands that there is no such thing as an apolitical technocrat. "A plan is a political document," he says. "Nasser invited the renowned Professor Ragnar Friesch, the father of econometrics, to Egypt in the early sixties. I was assigned to work closely with Friesch during his stay in Egypt. Nasser was eager to meet him, wanting to learn more about Friesch's complicated methods of planning. Friesch was to brief Nasser about the latest planning theories over breakfast one morning. But I was amazed when Nasser cancelled all appointments for the day and had Friesch stay on for lunch and dinner. He left Nasser's office very late at night, shaking his head in bewilderment. 'You have a very inquisitive and intelligent president,' Friesch whispered as we left Nasser's office."

Good economics often result in good policies. "Nasser was interested in development. He was especially keen on human resource development. He was a long-term strategist. He had a vision. He was driven by his ideals and a passion to develop Egypt. I share his passion," El-Imam says. "I actually never knew that Nasser took any note of me. I only realised it in 1977. I was about to board a plane at Cairo international airport when I ran into an old friend, Omar Othman, a former president of the University of Khartoum. Othman told me how the Sudanese leaders asked Nasser for an expert planner to create a national plan for the country in 1970. Nasser told the Sudanese that I was the best man for the job. But Nasser told the Sudanese that I was indispensable as I was doing very important work in Iraq."

So what was El-Imam doing in Iraq? "The newly installed Iraqi revolutionary government set up a secret committee to study what would happen if the West boycotted Iraqi oil. The Iraqis wanted to draw up a comprehensive national plan. The then Iraqi minister of planning, Jawwad Hashim, was a former student of mine. He was an affable young man in his early thirties. We had an excellent working relationship. I was selected by the United Nations to be project manager for Iraq. I went there with a political purpose. Iraq was the Arabs' only hope for salvation after the 1967 defeat. It was a land of promise — and plenty. Saddam Hussein was vice-president then, but he was the country's actual strongman. I knew that Saddam was the most pro-American ruler in the Arab world. But he desperately wanted to develop his country. He wanted to learn from Nasser's mistakes. The Iraqis wanted me to join the ruling Baath Party — but I politely declined. I told the Iraqis that I was a technocrat. Relations between Iraqi Baathists and Nasser's Egypt were bad," El-Imam explains.

His work as director of the UN planning project in Iraq between 1968 and 1974 gave him the space he needed to put his ideas into practice. "Iraq was under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to curb expenditure and balance its books. Saddam was on a spending spree. He had almost unlimited funds at his disposal as Iraq was awash with petro-dollars. I suggested that Iraq present the IMF with a plan that fulfilled all the stringent requirements of the international financial institutions. Meanwhile, I drafted a secret plan designed to facilitate the country's ambitious development goals. I virtually ran the show with Jawwad Hashim's assistance. I won Saddam's trust and approval. He gave me a carte blanche to do as I pleased. That was of critical importance in such an authoritarian regime. Saddam studied but never practised law. He donned a military uniform and battle fatigues, but he is no military man. Like Nasser, he wanted to know every single detail of the plan. 'What does a model mean?' Saddam would ask impatiently," El-Imam reminisces.

El-Imam claims he helped build Iraq and show Saddam Hussein what to do with his new-found fortune. "That's the way to play politics. In Iraq I had a wonderful opportunity to do just that. I loved every bit of it. I used to work for 20 hours a day. My wife was furious. She packed her things and took our seven children and returned to Cairo. I was left behind alone in Iraq, but I still enjoyed every minute of it," El-Imam said. "In Egypt, my own country, I never got to play that kind of politics. Certainly not when I was a minister."

After his sojourn in Iraq, El-Imam was commercial counsellor for the Arab Monetary Fund in Abu Dhabi, where he ran into his old friend Jawwad Hashim again. Two decades ago, El-Imam reluctantly accepted a ministerial position. His son convinced him to take up the challenge. On 20 March 1976 El-Imam became minister of planning in the government of then Prime Minister Mamdouh Salem.

According to El-Imam, former President Anwar El-Sadat made himself vulnerable to new dangers by his management of Nasser's national economic strategy. El-Imam never hit it off with Sadat. "The vitality of the early 1960s was inspiring, even though the decade ended in disaster," he explained. "I was a minister for 400 days. I resigned in early 1977 because I clashed with the then finance minister, Abdel-Moneim El-Qaissouni, over IMF stipulations. The fund insisted that Egypt do away with subsidies. We were in reality subsidising American farmers. We imported American wheat. The price of wheat skyrocketed. Sadat was livid. He wanted Egypt to follow IMF directions. He wanted to secure the backing of the Americans and the Paris Club donors," El-Imam says, his disapproval almost tangible.

El-Imam compares Egypt's bid in 1956 to attract American investment for the construction of the Aswan High Dam with the high-powered Egyptian delegation which visited America last year to vaunt Egypt's attractions as an emerging market. In 1956 America refused to fund the Aswan High Dam; last year's efforts have yet to bear fruit.

Born on 6 October 1924, El-Imam is a true Cairene. He was born and bred in the working-class district of El-Darb El-Ahmar, in the vicinity of the celebrated El-Hussein area. He is proud of his roots. "There were many Jews who lived in the area when I was young. Our next-door neighbour was Jewish and he had a beautiful daughter, Rachel. She was my first love," he chuckles. From reminiscing about an early romance, El-Imam progresses to Arab normalisation with Israel. "We lived together — Egyptian and Jew — in El-Darb El-Ahmar. We unconditionally accepted their presence in our midst," he says. But this acceptance does not apply to Israel. "For Israel to blend into the Middle East, there must be a coincidence between the aspirations of Arabs and Israelis; there must be a similarity in the conditions of the two peoples; there must be common long-term goals."

Nor is he overjoyed about the Middle East economic summit, which he claims "was supposed to rectify Israel's untenable position in the geographical space of the Arab world".

El-Imam holds strong views on privatisation, too. He sees haphazard privatisation as just another twist in the spiral downwards to economic ruin. He received his BA in economics from Cairo University's Faculty of Commerce in 1945 and a diploma in statistics in 1951. Later he did a doctorate at Leeds and fondly remembers the years he lived in northern England. In Leeds he became particularly aware of his national identity. He was in England when the Suez crisis erupted. "I had a week to go before I completed my PhD thesis. My supervisor was alarmed when I told him that I was in no mood to work. On 26 July 1956, I took the night train to London to renew my passport. As I stepped off the train, my eye caught the headline, 'Nasser Nationalises the Suez Canal.' I remember the date 29 October very well. I joined the anti-war demonstrations on the streets of Leeds and in London. My country had been invaded. I protested to my supervisor," El-Imam remembers.

El-Imam worked at the African Planning Institute in Dakar between 1962 and 1964. He travelled to Liberia, Mali, and other neighbouring west African countries. In Liberia, he worked closely with the late President Tubman. "I tried to contain Israel's role in Liberia and the rest of West Africa. The Israelis were infiltrating newly independent African states under the pretext of assisting with development and agricultural projects," El-Imam says. He resigned his post in Dakar to join the Central Auditing Agency in Cairo.

But Dakar was not El-Imam's last stop in sub-Saharan Africa. He headed the Egyptian delegation to the 11th extraordinary meeting of the Organisation of African Unity in the Zairean capital Kinshasa in December 1976. During his trips south, El-Imam was always puzzled and saddened at the chasm that divided Francophone from Anglophone Africans puzzled and saddened him. "The world economy can do away with Africans. According to the new economic logic, Africans are dispensable — and so are all the world's poor," he says.

Imam has had his fair share of personal tragedy. Ten years ago, he lost his wife. A couple of months ago, his son-in-law, Mohamed Shehab Saad, who was an active member of the Tagammu Party, died of heart failure. Shehab ran as an independent in the last general elections, but lost to the ruling National Democratic Party's candidate. Shehab was an activist who worked with the poor in Nasr City. Do any of El-Imam's children share his passions and ideals? Amani, Shehab's widow, is an activist who works with a non-governmental organisation, helping the poor in Upper Egypt. Amani, more than any of his other children, inherited her father's ideals, he said. "A man is a will — nothing else, nothing more," El-Imam says.

Some see El-Imam's Nasserist arguments as an embarrassing anachronism. Some see him as an old idealist. But his writings are widely acclaimed. His views cannot be ignored. "Those who are intellectually fossilised, like myself," El-Imam laughs, "still have an important role to play." Proud to be a fossil? "I was and still am against basing national development exclusively on foreign capital," El-Imam says. The proliferation of poverty and inequality deeply troubles him. As a planner, environmental degradation worries him, too. As an opposition politician, the denial of certain democratic freedoms concerns him. "When I was in power I enjoyed listening to opposing views," he says. He may be outdated; but he has yet to change his mind.

Profile by ***Gamal Nkrumah***

Pack of Cards *by Madame Sosostris*

▼ My dear friend Ramzy Yassa is back in town darlings, and I can't wait to hear what he has in store for us. Once more he will enchant us with one of his famous piano recitals which will take place this time at the Sofitel Hotel in Maadi on 15 February. The recital is sponsored by *Al-Ahram Weekly* among other sponsors, one more proof that we are keen connoisseurs of the arts. Personally, this is one event I have no intention of missing and I have started preparations, and purged my ears of all this heavy metal, especially in view of the persisting rumours that the genre has gone out of fashion rather in a hurry. I only listen to Mozart and Chopin these days, and some of the meekest of Beethoven. Ramzy's concert will be the coronation of my rehabilitation.



Ramzy Yassa's golden fingers

♣ Having been properly bewitched by the music I will lace my seven-league boots and transport myself to El-Hanager for the opening of Video Visions Cairo 2. This, dears, in case you did not know, is a Pro Helvetia-sponsored event under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and you all know how cultural these events usually are. Our minister of culture, **Farouk Hosni** will be there and so will Swiss Ambassador **Marianne von Grunigen** and El-Hanager director, **Hoda Wasfi**. This promises to be as enthralling as the first video art exhibition they staged last year. I am so excited that for once in my life I do not know what to wear for the occasion. I'm sure I'll come up with something really stunning as usual, but meanwhile the suspense is killing me.